

Hafa Adai!

DLNR chief faces illegal OT suit. **PAGE 3**

GRMC kicks off the new year with TJC Accreditation. **PAGE 6**

\$1

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Villagomez likely House speaker

Joel Camacho may be voted vice speaker; Propst as floor leader

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) will likely remain the speaker of the 23rd Legislature.

Multiple sources at the Legislature disclosed that the majority in the 23rd House will likely vote for Villagomez as speaker during the inauguration and organizational session this Monday since 13 members are independents and is the chamber's new majority.

In the 2022 general election, Villagomez received 1,945 votes—just two votes shy of Precinct 3 top vote-getter, House vice speaker Blas Jonathan T. Attao (Ind-Saipan), based on



Villagomez

the Commonwealth Election Commission's official tabulation results in the Nov. 8, 2022 general elections.

It will be his seventh term in the House.

Villagomez took over the speaker position in January 2021 after Rep. Ralph N. Yumul (Ind-Saipan), at the time a Republican, flipped his vote and broke the even split in the fourth voting for the speakership, ending the impasse

See **SPEAKER** on Page 4

BOS returns remaining \$856K BOOST funds

Bank of Saipan returned yesterday to the CNMI Department of Finance the remaining BOOST (Building Optimism, Opportunities and Stability Together) Program funds in the amount of \$856,338.78.

In a letter addressed to acting Finance secretary

Bertha Camacho, Bank of Saipan said that following the BOOST program and applications recommended by the Grant Review Panel and approved by Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, the bank cut 28 award checks in the amount of \$831,000 which have not

See **BOOST** on Page 4

'DPS plagued by low morale'

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The transition team assigned to look into the Department of Public Safety has concluded that the department has been

suffering from low morale under the leadership of former DPS commissioner Robert Guerrero.

According to the transition report for DPS that was sub-

See **DPS** on Page 4



NEW TRAFFIC LIGHTS

The \$1.94-million Department of Public Works traffic light at the intersection of Quartermaster Road and Beach Road has now been completed and is now fully functional, which is almost two years since breaking ground and commencing the project in June 2021. The traffic lights were installed in the intersection to properly regulate the increased number of vehicles traversing on and off the route and to reduce accidents.

LEIGH GASES

Jan. 6 panel shutting down after referring Trump for alleged crimes

By **MARY CLARE JALONICK**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP)—The House Jan. 6 committee is shutting down, having completed a whirlwind 18-month investigation of the 2021

Capitol insurrection and having sent its work to the Justice Department along with a recommendation for prosecuting former President Donald Trump.

See **TRUMP** on Page 4

INSIDE



LOCAL

The High School Red Cross Club provides opportunities for students to give back.

PAGE 6



ENVIRONMENT

Bill Gates, who gave \$5 billion, made 2022's biggest charitable donation, says the Chronicle of Philanthropy.

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LIFE & STYLE

The sheriff said the injuries Jeremy Renner has suffered appear to be from a "tragic accident."

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Local

AD2023 INAGUGURAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

Governor-Elect
Arnold I. Palacios

Lt. Governor-Elect
David M. Apatang

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- DATE: Saturday, January 7, 2023
- TIME: Show time 6:00 AM / Shotgun Start 7:00 AM
- PLACE: LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort - East Course
- FORMAT: Individual Double Peoria
- BANQUET: Awards luncheon immediately following the tournament.

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- 5th. Place \$200.00
- 6th. - 10th. Place \$100.00
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Chaplains join air advisor team on a wing and a prayer

By STAFF SGT. RYAN BROOKS
36th Wing Public Affairs

While the Air Force has been in the business of sending air advisors across the globe to advance the training of our ally and partner nations in an array of areas, training chaplains as air advisors has not been tried... until now.

"As far as rarity goes, we are the first religious support team to go through air advisor training together and I'm the first religious affairs Airman to go through this training specifically for the chaplain corps," said U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Victor Walker, 36th Wing chaplain corps non-commissioned officer in charge of readiness and training.

Walker and two chaplains were trained to augment as air advisors with the 36th Contingency Response Group to bolster regional key leader engagements in the Pacific Air Forces major command. Their training took place at the USAF Expeditionary Center on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, during the summer of 2022.

Air advisors plan, execute, evaluate, and advise operations that increase partner nation and coalition air power capabilities and relations. These components align with a high priority of the chaplain corps in PACAF.

"The PACAF Chaplain Corps' second priority and goal is to 'equip religious support teams to inspire readiness, promote spiritual resiliency, and cultivate international religious affairs with allies and partners, and utilize PACAF RSTs in strategic key leader engagement opportunities to strengthen alliances and further new partnerships,'" said Maj. Kelvin Francis, 36th Wing chaplain corps wing chaplain.

The Air Force was faced with two options regarding the chaplain corps, now fresh to the air advisor program. Create a standard operating procedure from whole cloth before embarking on a new path forward, or forge ahead and do both concurrently. So, they decided to 'build the plane while

See CHAPLAINS on Page 3

DLNR chief faces illegal OT suit

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
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REPORTER

Attorney General Edward Manibusan continues to seek out those who allegedly received illegal Super Typhoon Yutu-related overtime compensation, this time with a lawsuit against Department of Land and Natural Resources Secretary Anthony T. Benavente.

According to the lawsuit filed with the Superior Court through OAG Chief Solicitor Robert Glass Jr., Manibusan alleges that Benavente received over \$30,000 in typhoon premium pay that he should not have been entitled to.

As relief, Manibusan is asking the court to issue a judgment of \$36,198.43 for recovery of the allegedly unlawful typhoon premium payments, overtime payments, or extra payments not authorized by

law, without valid appropriation, and in excess of the salary ceiling.

Aside from returning the

money, the AG also asks the court to issue a declaratory judgment declaring that the personnel regulations

authorizing payment of typhoon emergency premium pay, overtime, and extra pay do not apply to gubernatorial

appointees; that the director of Personnel and governor lack the authority to authorize additional compensation except

as provided by law; and that compensation in excess of the

See YUTU on Page 4

CHAPLAINS

From page 2

flying it’.

“We are designing and strategizing the role of the chaplain corps air advisors on the run,” said Maj. Aaron Thorne, 36th Wing chaplain corps deputy wing chaplain. “People around the world tend to trust their local spiritual leaders, and we will meet with them on the same level. It’s not a commander talking to local leaders. It’s our ministers with theirs, building relationships that way. The chaplain corps can support the commander’s priorities in this area of responsibility by partner relationship building through trust.”

Benefits of chaplain corps air advisors extend beyond just to foreign religious leaders. The unique confidentiality protection of the chaplaincy and its mobile ready ability provides a unique asset in their area of responsibility.

“We’re the most mobile helping agency out there,” said Walker. “It’s far more difficult for mental health to go to a spoke because of the legal requirements in which they can operate. We have no such obligations or restrictions. It’s the same thing for a Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office. Many of them tend to be GS employees and they’re not going to all of the hubs and spokes like we are. While we’re not doing SAPR or mental health jobs, we can, however, help triage and care for the Airmen while they’re on deployment or TDY until

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21D129A	2018 HYUNDAI KONA SPORT	\$20,789	\$15,995	18P397	2018 MAZDA CX5 SPORT	\$25,765	\$20,995
17P370	2017 TOYOTA COROLLA LE	\$20,726	\$16,995	21D106A	2017 TOYOTA RAV4 SPORT	\$23,760	\$21,995
17P341	2017 MAZDA 6 SPORT	\$18,355	\$16,995	18P416	2018 TOYOTA RAV4 LE	\$31,648	\$22,995
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21H079A	2020 HYUNDAI ELANTRA SE	\$21,064	\$16,995	20P476	2020 MAZDA 3 HB PREMIUM	\$33,050	\$24,995
18P405	2018 HYUNDAI ELANTRA SE	\$19,004	\$16,995	22M021A	2019 MAZDA 6	\$30,118	\$24,995
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18P393	2018 NISSAN ROGUE SV	\$22,661	\$17,995	22M050A	2018 TOYOTA CAMRY XLE	\$27,271	\$24,995
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22M075A	2015 HYUNDAI GENESIS G80 LIMITED	\$24,374	\$18,995	13P359	2013 TOYOTA FJ CRUISER	\$33,890	\$27,995
21H077A	2013 TOYOTA 4 RUNNER SR5	\$23,355	\$18,995	18P344	2018 TOYOTA TACOMA SR5	\$34,836	\$31,995
18P398	2018 MAZDA CX5 TOURING	\$23,263	\$19,995	20H141E	2018 HYUNDAI GENESIS	\$24,374	\$34,995
22H186A	2020 HYUNDAI VELOSTER	\$29,120	\$19,995	18P411	2018 TOYOTA 4 RUNNER	\$41,254	\$36,995
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See CHAPLAINS on Page 4

IPI denies discriminatory allegations of ex-pit manager

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC has denied all allegation filed by a former pit manager at the IPI casino who claims that the casino operator discriminated against him.

According to the response filed by IPI through its lawyer, James Sirok, the casino investor denies the allegations made

by Stephen Abonita, claiming that IPI's employment decisions related to the plaintiff were governed by legitimate, nondiscriminatory reasons.

"Plaintiff failed to use ordinary care and diligence in the performance of his duties and failed to comply substantially with the reasonable directions of IPI and internal personnel rules and regulations covering the actions, conduct, duties,

and behavior of IPI's employees," the response stated.

"Plaintiff cannot establish a causal connection between the exercise of his personal rights to take vacation and leave, for the payment for gas for his car, because of the failure of being promoted, to his resignation from employment with IPI, or to certain claimed wages, (including overtime), and any adverse employment action or

discriminatory action alleged to have been taken by IPI. IPI listened to plaintiff's requests and accommodated plaintiff on several occasions when it was requested to do so, such that any of IPI's failure to accommodate all of plaintiff's requests was governed by legitimate nondiscriminatory or non-retaliatory reasons," Sirok added.

Also, IPI claims that Abo-

nita failed to state a claim, or claims, upon which relief can be granted.

IPI also claims there is no supplemental jurisdiction for the U.S. District Court for the NMI to consider plaintiff's contract claims, which are separate from and nonconnected to his discrimination claims.

In addition, IPI claims that Abonita's claims are barred by virtue of his failure to mitigate damages and are barred by the statute of limitations.

Bonita, a Philippine national previously employed by IPI as a casino pit supervisor, has filed a discrimination lawsuit against his former employer, alleging that IPI paid him sig-

nificantly less than his Caucasian and Chinese fellow pit managers because he is a Filipino. A pit manager typically supervises the operation of the casino floor.

Abonita, through his attorney, Bruce Berline, also claims that IPI required him to work overtime but failed to compensate him for it and retaliated against him for joining protests against the company alongside his fellow Filipinos.

The plaintiff is demanding a jury trial and wants the court to order IPI to pay him back pay, front pay, emotional distress pay, punitive damages, and other relief the court may deem necessary.

TRUMP

From page 1

The committee's time officially ends Tuesday when the new Republican-led House is sworn in. With many of the committee's staff already departed, remaining aides have spent the last two weeks releasing many of the panel's materials, including its 814-page final report, about 200 transcripts of witness interviews, and documents used to support its conclusions.

Lawmakers said they wanted to make their work public to underscore the seriousness of the attack and Trump's

multi-pronged effort to try to overturn the election.

"Accountability is now critical to thwart any other future scheme to overturn an election," Chairman Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., and Vice Chairwoman Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., wrote in a departing message on Monday. "We have made a series of criminal referrals, and our system of Justice is responsible for what comes next."

Some of the committee's work—such as videotape of hundreds of witness interviews—will not be made public immediately. The committee is sending those videos and some other committee records to the National Archives, which by

law would make them available in 50 years. Members of the committee said they didn't release that videotape now because it would have been too difficult to edit it and redact sensitive information.

Incoming Republican leaders may try to get those materials much sooner, though. A provision in a package of proposed House rules released Sunday calls for the National Archives to transfer "any records related to the committee" back to the House no later than Jan. 17.

It is unclear whether the GOP-led House could enforce the provision and what they would do with the materials.

The committee's conclusion comes after one of the most aggressive and wide-ranging congressional investigations in recent memory. The panel formally or informally interviewed more than 1,000 witnesses, collected more than 1 million documents and held 10 well-watched hearings. The two Republicans and seven Democrats on the panel were able to conduct the investigation with little interference after House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy declined to appoint minority members, angry that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi had rejected two of his suggested appointments.

YUTU

From page 3

salary ceiling cannot be authorized except as provided by law.

According to the lawsuit, Benavente accrued over \$36,000 in total OT

compensation, causing an excess in his statutory salary of \$54,000, which is against the law.

The lawsuit said that Benavente received typhoon premium pay in the total gross amount of \$6,198.43 back in 2018 for Yutu-related work done that year, while at least

\$30,000 has been paid since May 17, 2022. He allegedly continues to be overpaid to the present.

Aside from Benavente, other former Torres administration Cabinet members are facing similar lawsuits, including former Department of Community and Cultur-

al Affairs secretary Robert Hunter, former Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services commissioner Claudio Norita, former Department of Finance secretary Larissa Larson, Department of Public Works secretary James Ada, and more to come.

CHAPLAINS

From page 3

they can get back to the hub and receive expeditionary medical support. Also, the commanders have a certain trust with the chaplain corps because we are uniquely embedded in their units."

Under the high stress and dangerous situations which deployments can bring, that extra ear to listen and that extra skilled triage consultant to assist medics can prove life-changing and life-saving.

"As a chaplain, I could talk to another clergy member about things like crisis intervention, crisis counseling, solution-focused counseling, or dealing with suicidal

ideation," said Thorne. "In addition, we can also do airman-to-airman talks or airman-to-pastor talks.

"Tech. Sgt. Walker is also equipped to do intervention, mitigation and triage. He can also help with suicide intervention and care for the dead and dying. So, expect us working with medics in trauma or combat situations with coalition partners."

A sense of purpose and mission fuel these RSTs to continue exploring new avenues to serve. For this team of chaplains, crisis counseling is highly rewarding.

"Throughout my career, I felt called to serve the people who are on the ground," said Thorne. "And that started with my RED HORSE deployment

and being around special tactics. They're the very point of the end of our spear here at Andersen AFB. I've always been drawn to the operational side. Oftentimes, they're in harm's way getting so much of the mission on the ground accomplished. I would argue that it can take a different type of care. It can be a long and slow process of building trust required be before they open up. That time is so important and it lays the groundwork for when someone's in trouble and I get a call, 'hey 'Chap,' can we talk?' This is why we do what we do."

The chaplain corps entering the realm of air advisors is another innovation to drive success in the mission of the U.S. Air Force as it looks for ways

to build ever stronger bonds with other nations.

"Here at the local level, gaining the training will allow us to augment the CRG air advisor mission and provide a low-density asset that is able to get after the soft messaging with key leaders of partner nations and allies as religious leaders that others may not be able to do," said Francis. "Simply put, our goal is to add a new capability to assist the 36th Wing mission as well as the USINDOPACOM and Department of State's mission to increase partnerships, enhance security cooperation and increase stability in the region by what we as chaplains bring to the table. Aside from that, the training was extremely valuable and a whole lot of fun."

SPEAKER

From page 1

in the 22nd House inauguration and organizational session.

The voting ended the Republican Party's decades-old control of the House and completed the ascendance of the NMI Democratic Party.

Source also disclosed that Rep. Joel C. Camacho (Ind-Saipan) will likely be voted as vice speaker, while Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan) will be the floor leader.

The 23rd House is composed of 13 independents, four Democrats, and three Republicans.

Former House speaker Oscar M. Babauta said yesterday

that it is the first time in the CNMI history that independents compose the majority in the House.

The independents are Vilagomez, Vincent Raymon S. Aldan, Roman C. Benavente, Joseph Arriola Flores, Manny Gregory T. Castro, John Paul P. Sablan, Attao, Marissa Renee Flores, Yumul, Joel C. Camacho, Malcom Omar,

Angelo Atalig Camacho, and Julie Marie Atalig Ogo.

The four Democrats are Diego Vincent Fejeran Camacho, Edwin K. Propst, Vicente Castro Camacho, and Denita K. Yangetmai.

The three Republicans are Roy Christopher Ada, Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona, and Patrick H. San Nicolas.

DPS

From page 1

mitted last Jan. 3 for the review of governor-elect Arnold I. Palacios and lieutenant governor-elect David M. Apatang, the general disposition of DPS officers has been characterized by low morale, based on interviews conducted with DPS personnel.

"The Department of Public Safety was under the command of commissioner Guerrero for almost eight years. Based on the transition team's interviews with DPS personnel, both past and present, the general disposition at DPS was one of low morale, brought on by retaliation, nepotism and cronyism, political discrimination, micro-management, and training deficiencies," the report states.

The report alleges that officers who launched complaints against Guerrero's "inner circle" were more often than not punished.

"If officers were critical of the commissioner's 'inner circle,' or lodged complaints, they were often punished by being posted to undesirable locations or assignments, or even transferred to another department or agency," said the report.

The interviewed personnel, the report states, felt and witnessed that the commissioner favored those related to him by providing them with extra benefits.

"Police interviewed felt Guerrero favored those related to him and those who were in his 'inner circle' with overtime, job promotions for those who were less qualified, travel, and other rewards," it said.

In addition, the transition team, led by Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan), found that all DPS personnel were asked and expected to show up to political rallies, no matter what their political affiliation was.

"While DPS personnel are supposed to be non-political at the office and during working hours, police officers interviewed complained that they were asked and expected to show up to political rallies and gatherings," the report said.

Also, the report alleges that most DPS sections were placed under the immediate command of Guerrero and were supervised by those in his "inner circle" causing mistrust within the department.

"Sections such as the Criminal Investigation Bureau, Internal Affairs, Boating Safety, and Logistics were placed under the immediate command of the commissioner through his 'inner circle' and would report directly to him. Officers who worked in these areas reported they had trust issues with their supervisors and would often refrain from speaking up for fear of retaliation," the report said.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

BOOST

From page 1

been distributed. The bank has voided the award checks and has ceased issuing award checks altogether, given the concerns about the BOOST program.

In addition, the Grant Review Panel recommended 22 other BOOST applications that were approved by Torres, but the checks for which had

not been prepared by the bank due to insufficient funds to cover the awards.

The bank returned the remaining BOOST funds in two cashier's checks—one in the amount of \$831,000 for the 28 voided award checks and the other for \$25,338.78, the balance of BOOST funds.

"The decision on what to do with these checks properly belongs to the CNMI government," the bank stated in its letter to Finance. (PR)

2 GCC students awarded Camacho foundation scholarships



The Felix M. and Governor Carlos G. Camacho Scholarship Foundation has awarded Guam Community College students Aira May Ngalongalo and Marshelly Borja \$1,500 for this academic year 2022-2023.

The scholarship founda-

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Guam Community College students Aira May Ngalongalo and Marshelly are awarded scholarship funds by the Felix M. and Governor Carlos G. Camacho Scholarship Foundation.

tion has always been a generous partner of GCC in getting business students into the classroom without having to worry about how they will pay for their education.

The foundation's mission is to provide financial assistance for students pursuing business administration degrees at GCC and the University of Guam with the expectation that the foundation will invest in the future leaders of the island community.

Applicants must maintain a 3.0 grade point average, full-time status, and be enrolled in the Liberal Studies

– Business track, Accounting, Marketing, or Supervision and Management Associate degree program. An applicant's status as a first-generation student attending college plays a major consideration in selection.

The foundation anticipates awarding three to six scholarships at the end of each school year. An announcement will be made at a later date on when they will begin accepting applications. To learn more about the Felix M. & Governor Carlos G. Camacho Scholarship Foundation log on to guamcc.edu/scholarships. (PR)

The Hut is latest ProaPerks partner

The Hut, a Mexican restaurant, is the latest to sign on as a Northern Marianas College ProaPerks partner, joining many other businesses and organizations. All card-carrying members of the NMC ProaPerks program can now receive a free iced tea with each order (maximum of four orders).

The Hut is located on Beach Road, across the TSL Plaza. Their menu can be found on their Facebook page (facebook.com/thehut670).

The Hut joins the growing list of ProaPerks partners, such as 153 Restaurant, 360 Restaurant, 4EVER CNMI, Alamo Car Rental, AllStar Sporting Goods, Aqua Connections, Inc., AQUASMIT, Athlete's Foot, Avis Rent A Car, BAB Korean Restaurant Cup Bab, Beach Garden Hotel & Apartment, Bistro Marianas, Capital Hotel, Chagi Norf Kitchen, Boarderline, Bolis R US 2, Candle J, Caravan of Food, Casa Decor, Casa Urashima, Chelu Alynez Enterprise, Chungi Wa Korean Restaurant, Clear Water Place, Clear Water Residence, Clear Water Villa, Coral Garden Hotel, Cosmos Lounge, D' Chef's Kitchen, Docomo Pacific, Dollar Days, Enterprise

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ki, Residence Lodge, Saipan Computer Services, Salt & Barber Salon, Shirley's Cafe, Spicy Thai Noodle, Salty's, Stay Cafe, Summit Auto Repair Shop, Surf Club, Residence Lodge, Tempura's Best Restaurant, The Hut, The Ohala Foundation Clothing, The Pacific Supply, The Shack, Time Creation Corp., Tinian Diamond Hotel, Tom Yum Restaurant, Tribe Marianas, and Triple J Motors.

Companies and other interested organizations who would like to become part of the ProaPerks program and take advantage of the buying power of thousands of individuals that include NMC alumni, students, and employees, can find more information by emailing proaperks@marianas.edu. (NMC)

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IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN THE :
MATTER OF: : Civil Action
MARIA A. STOL, : No. 22-0295
Decedent :
ASHLEY MARIE : PROPOSED
GLASER : AMENDED NOTICE
SIKAYUN, : FOR PUBLICATION
Petitioner :

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the last will and testament of the late MARIA A. STOL, of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, has been offered for probate in the Superior Court of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and that the case has been set for hearing before this court on Thursday, January 26, 2023, at 10:00 a.m., in Courtroom 220A, before Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho, at which time and place all persons interested in the estate of MARIA A. STOL, deceased, are to appear and contest the same, if they choose.

Notice is also given to all heirs of and persons having claims against the Estate of Maria A. Stol, deceased, and to all persons claiming an interest in said Estate, that they shall file such claims with the Clerk of this Court within sixty (60) days from the first publication of this Notice. Copies of such claims should be provided to the petitioner, Ashley Marie Glaser Sikayun with postal address at P.O. Box 501766, Chalan Kanoa, Saipan MP 96950. All claims not so filed shall be forever barred.

/s/
Judge Joseph Norita Camacho



NMC

The Hut is the latest to sign on as a Northern Marianas College ProaPerks partner, joining many other businesses and organizations. More information about their special promotion for ProaPerks card holders can be found at www.marianas.edu/proaperks.

EOC cancels man-o-war warning but risk of rip currents remains

The beach hazards statement for Indo-Pacific man-o-war jellyfish has now been cancelled but the high risk of rip currents remains through Saturday afternoon along east facing reefs of the Marianas.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point,


dangerous rip currents are present along east facing reefs through Saturday afternoon.

Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water.

Also, man-o-war may still be found on beaches and the waters of the Marianas, but the beach hazards statement has been cancelled as fewer reports have been received over the past few days.

Precautionary/preparedness actions...

The public is reminded to stay out of the water along east facing reef lines. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. (PR/ Saipan Tribune)



COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BID CUC-IFB-23-012

Carbon Change Out of Granular Activated Carbon Filters (10 Sites)

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for Carbon Change Out of Granular Activated Carbon Filters (10 Sites) in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The intent of the contract is for the Contractor to provide all labor, equipment, supplies, and materials necessary for the removal and installation of GAC and Gravel media replacement, disposal of spent GAC and Gravel media, possible sample collection, transportation, and the possible supply of gravel media, analyses of spent media, and additional waste containers/drums for disposal, if necessary. CUC requires the Project to be completed in 180 calendar days from date of award of contract.

The project is funded by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of **\$200.00** (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **December 28, 2022 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No. 17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-23-012, Carbon Change Out of Granular Activated Carbon Filters (10 Sites)" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 17, 2023, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. A Payment Bond of One Hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 a.m. (ChST) on January 4, 2023** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Nicolette Villagomez, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer via email address nicolette.villagomez@cucgov.org and to Christie Sablan, P&S, Senior Administrative Technician – christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLON
Purchasing Administrator

ARC gives students opportunity to give back

The American Red Cross' mission is to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobi-

lizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors. The Marianas High School Red Cross Club fulfills this

mission by providing opportunities for students to give back to their community.

Working with the NMI local



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Red Cross Club provides its members with the opportunity to help the community by doing outreach to teach others about disaster preparedness and what you can do to become a volunteer to assist with the Red Cross humanitarian work.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Marianas High School Red Cross Club provides opportunities for students to give back to their community.

chapter and High School Red Cross Club coordinator Richard Defan, the club provides its members with the opportunity to help the community by doing outreach to teach others about disaster preparedness and what you can do to become a volunteer to assist with the Red Cross humanitarian work.

"Joining the Red Cross club allows me to do service activities to help the community and myself. I want to positively impact my community with the extra time that I have," said club member Amena Mahmud.

Amira Shairee De Guzman

says joining the club has enabled her to grow. "Red Cross allows me to develop and grow as a person by doing volunteer work," she said.

Sunny Ma said the Red Cross club allows her to develop and enhance her social skills.

"Red Cross is a benevolent organization and allows me to connect with others and become involved in my community!" said another club member, Eunice Molina.

According to Defan, the clubs were created "to engage our local high school students with a goal to provide community service and

volunteering opportunities and to give the students at the high schools the chance to help our NMI families."

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides comfort to victims of disasters; teaches skills that save lives; distributes international humanitarian aid; and supports veterans, military members and their families. The Red Cross is a nonprofit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to deliver its mission. For more information, visit redcross.org/NMI or call 234-3459. (PR/Saipan Tribune)

GRMC kicks off the new year with TJC Accreditation

DEDEDO, Guam—The Guam Regional Medical City has recently earned The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval for Hospital Accreditation as a result of its rigorous three-day survey in October 2022. This marks GRMC's third accreditation with TJC. Additionally, GRMC was granted Centers for Medicare

and Medicaid Services.

The Gold Seal is a symbol of quality that reflects a healthcare organization's commitment to providing safe and quality patient care. The Joint Commission accreditation means that GRMC has complied with the highest national standards for safety and quality of care; it also means that GRMC is committed to continually improving the care it provides its patients and the entire island community.

During the unannounced onsite review, a team of TJC surveyors evaluated GRMC's compliance with hospital standards spanning several areas, including the following: provision of care, medication management, patient rights and responsibilities, performance improvement, infection prevention and control, emergency management, environment of care, human resources, and leadership.

GRMC president and CEO Alan Funtanilla received several comments and accolades from TJC surveyors regarding their visit to the hospital. "I heard nothing but how the surveyors were just blown away with how passionate [GRMC staff] are with the many things that we do as an organization (patient care, performance improvement, facilities management, and emergency management, etc.)," said Alan.

One surveyor shared with Alan, "We know you've only been in existence for about eight years. You started a hospital because of the relative lack of specialty care here on island and the real need to serve the people of Guam, and I think that is a fantastic and admirable vision— you've done and accomplished a lot!"

To learn more about The Joint Commission, visit the website: www.jointcommission.org. (GRMC)

Public warned against boating in hazardous conditions

A small craft advisory is now in effect until 6am today, Friday.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, east to northeast winds of 15 to 25 knots are expected and seas will briefly rise to 8 to 10 feet in the coastal waters of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

Conditions will be hazardous to small craft. A small craft advisory means that wind speeds of 21 to 33 knots are expected to produce wave conditions hazardous to small craft.

Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid boating in hazardous conditions. (PR/Saipan Tribune)

5 NMI students land on BJU's Dean's List

Five students from the CNMI have made it to the Bob Jones University's Dean's List for the fall 2022 semester.

Heng Bao, a freshman Kinesiology major from Saipan, was joined on the Dean's List by Junyu Chen, a freshman Engineering major; Feiyang Huang, a freshman Information Technology major; Jiashen Song, a freshman Computer Science major; and Yurong Zhang, a freshman Studio Art major from Saipan, was named to the Dean's List.

The five students join approximately 845 other Bob Jones University students on Dean's List.

The Dean's List recognizes students who earn a 3.00-3.74 grade point average during the semester.

Located in Greenville,



South Carolina, Bob Jones University provides Christian liberal arts education and offers over 100 undergraduate and graduate programs in religion, education, fine arts and communication,

arts and science, health professions, and business.

BJU has over 3,000 students from nearly every state and more than 40 countries. (PR/Saipan Tribune)

SCC to install new officers; award 2022 Business Person of the Year

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce presents the 2022 "Bowties & Diamonds" Business Person of the Year annual fundraiser gala on Saturday, Jan. 21, 2023, at the Hibiscus Hall of Crowne Plaza Saipan.

The BPOY gala serves as the SCC's largest annual fundraiser for Chamber programming activities such as the

scholarship program, online seminars, workforce development training, small business support, and more to benefit its membership and local community.

The event honors past Business Person of the Year recipients, current nominees, and the SCC board of directors. The SCC will be recognizing

and awarding a 2022 Business Person of the Year, 2022 Small Business of the Year, 2022 Start-up of the Year, 2022 Nonprofit of the Year, and 2022 Chamber Member of the Year. Additionally, the event celebrates the installation of the 2023 board of directors.

Nominees for the Business Person of the Year and SCC

awards will be announced in the following weeks. The 2022 SCC award nominees are selected by members of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce and include both members and non-members alike. The winners of these awards will be voted on by the Saipan Chamber of Commerce membership official

representatives.

Visit www.marianasevents.com/events/scc-annual-gala/ to purchase individual tickets or an event table. Tickets are \$120/person and \$1000/table (eight persons).

For more information, email contactus@saipan-chamber.org or call 670-234-7150. (PR)

Gala marks Xtreme Fitness 670's end of 2022

Xtreme Fitness 670, the fitness group that leads the Zumba fitness program at the Marianas Business Plaza from Monday through Saturday, celebrated its "Yearend Party to Remember 2022" last Dec. 26 at the Hibiscus Hall of the Crowne Plaza Resort. The event also saw the a dance group called Unbreakable Team taking first place in the dance group competition.

There were also five Star of the Night awardees, who also received cash prizes. They were Sarah Lee, Maricel Pangelinan, Ana Cabael, and Mary Jane Basilio. But the Superstar of the Night 2022 was Joan Oliverio, who received a special cash award and a gift certificate.

Edna Aureo, who was the group's very first 15-Day

Weight Loss Challenge winner, received a special prize.

In the dance group competition, the Unbreakable Team, led by Cristina Villas and Oliverio, took first place with \$500 in cash prize. The team led by Crisanta Brien and Maki Reyes won second place and \$300 in cash. The third place-winner was the Unstopable Team led by Ayra Anier and Maritoni Duarte, which was awarded a \$200 cash prize.

The competition judges were Dee Clayton, 2022 Miss Marianas Savannah Delos Santos, and Wildredo Arago Abu.

"At the beginning, I had the impression that we didn't have to try too hard to prepare. We were just us, and it turned out to be so much fun. We have received many compliments



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The five Star of the Night awardees show off their awards after being recognized at the "Yearend Party to Remember 2022" of Xtreme Fitness 670 last Dec. 26 at the Hibiscus Hall of the Crowne Plaza Resort.

and positive comments from our guests and outsiders," said Michelle Olita of Xtreme Fitness 670. "We would like to

thank all of our sponsors who have been supportive. If not for them, our event would not have been possible and our first year-end party would not have been successful."

The night's host, Miss Earth Fire 2019 Zoe Stephanson, was joined by Rosalyn Ajoste

as the event moderator, and Maria Arnie Pesayco as program operator.

Special awardees who received certificates of appreciation included Aureo, Cristina Villas, and Oliverio as Fitness Lead Shadows. Another group of fitness shadowers were

recognized as well, including Maricel Pangelinan, Sarah Lee, Crisanta Brien, Maki Reyes, and Maritoni Duarte.

Xtreme Fitness 670's fitness program is available to the community free of charge and they have a complete set of instructors. Zin Mitch has five licenses to teach, such as Zumba B1 with the specialty of Zumba Toning, Zumba Gold, Zumba Gold Toning, Zumba Plate, and, this coming February, a new Zumba license for Zumba Kids. Zin Vince Cabrera is also licensed for Zumba B1. Coach Angelo Galfo has four licenses to teach such things as Strong Hiit, weight training, steps, and kickboxing. Coach Christine Cabrera, as well as Coach Angelo's assistant coach, runs Xtreme Fitness 670's fitness program at the Marianas Business Plaza, which is held from Monday through Saturday from 6pm to 7:45pm. (PR/Saipan Tribune)

HELPING HANDS INITIATIVE

Church donates backpacks with school supplies to Palau

It all started with a small handful of backpacks being donated to the Koror Elementary School when a pair of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints missionaries noticed some children did not have the school supplies that they needed during their time at school. That became the impetus behind what would eventually become a donation to all elementary schools in Palau.

The church's Humanitarian Department in Guam supported an idea of the entire Koror Elementary School receiving backpacks with school supplies for Christmas, which totaled 700 backpacks.

Church members Angie and John Ngiraked in Koror wondered why a less needy school was receiving this donation when there were so many more needy schools. They requested 160 more school sup-

plies backpacks for Meyun's Elementary.

At a business dinner, Angie e Ngiraked envisioned all the elementary children of Palau receiving school supplies backpacks and wondered if each of Palau's 17 elementary schools could receive backpacks for their new school year. This would be quite an undertaking, as it was late summer, and the school season would be quickly upon them.

After a request was submitted to the church's Guam Humanitarian Department, approval was given. Coordinating with the Palau Ministry of Education and the Western Caroline Trading Company, arrangements were made to purchase school supplies and backpacks for 1,663 students in all.

Now it was time to call in the troops. The church's Koror

Branch is known for having members that participate in many services. A Helping Hands service project was planned with church members, youth, and missionaries young and old who then came to participate in this unique project.

All got together to write handwritten notes for each backpack. The packs were assembled according to the number needed for each school, including the outer island schools that would need to have the backpacks transported by boat.

Among the 17 schools that were receiving backpacks with school supplies were Aimeilik, Airai, Angaur, GB Harris, Ibobang, Koror, Melekeok, Meyuns, Ngaraard, Ngarchelong, Ngardmau, Ngeremlengui, Peleiu, PJF (Kayangel), Pulo Anna, and Sonsorol. (PR/Saipan Tribune)



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Students of the Melekeok Elementary School in Palau pose with the donated backpacks.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Xtreme Fitness 670's fitness program is available to the community free of charge and they have a complete set of instructors.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The dance group competition judges are, from left, Wildredo Arago Abu, Dee Clayton, and 2022 Miss Marianas Savannah Delos Santos.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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EDITORIAL

Memo to House GOP: It's all about the policy, stupid

The 118th Congress convenes Tuesday with each party holding a slim majority in one chamber. In the Senate, a Democratic coalition enjoys a 51-49 advantage. In the House, Republicans have a 222-212 edge.

The latter provides a much-needed check on President Joe Biden, who has blown out the budget in his first two years to appease progressives. Republicans have also telegraphed that they will use their majority in the lower chamber to launch investigations of their political opponents, in retribution for Democratic probes into the Trump administration.

Following the November election, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, the likely next speaker, tweeted, "In just 47 days, House Republicans will have the gavel, and we will be prepared to hold the Biden administration accountable from day one. Our investigations are just getting started."

But an incessant preoccupation with turning up dirt on the other side would be an error.

Post-election polling reveals that Republicans failed to capitalize on the president's numerous missteps in part because they offered independent and moderate voters no clear alternative agenda. Launching investigations as a means of pay-back represents the kind of business-as-usual in Washington that warms the hearts of partisans but turns off many other Americans.

"For Republicans to be successful on the policy and political front," John Tillman of the American Culture Project wrote in an op-ed for Fox News, "they must lead on the issues voters care about."

He's spot on. This is particularly important heading into a presidential election. House Republicans have the opportunity to offer voters a clear contrast to Democrats on a wide array of issues, including education, energy independence, spending and economic policy. There will be little chance that any such legislation will be signed into law. But Republicans can show voters they are serious about tackling issues that matter by proposing, debating and passing legislation with an eye on boosting a stagnant economy, easing prices, getting a handle on the soaring national debt and offering families increased choices when it comes to schooling.

Consider the 1994 Contract With America, which was instrumental in helping the GOP take control of the House that year for the first time in four decades. It was a comprehensive legislative agenda that appealed to Americans yearning for common-sense governance.

"The best way to ensure that 2024 is policy-focused rather than personality-driven, is to listen, sell and enact policy that improves the lives of most Americans," Mr. Tillman notes. "Investigations are necessary, but they don't change peoples' lives for the better. Policy does."

This is sound advice. House Republicans will be making a colossal mistake if they fail to take it.

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A New Year's border crisis resolution

Ever true to its traditions, Official Washington has celebrated its holidays by toasting its successes, and then cruising comfortably into yet another new year.

So this is the right time to remind our capital's cognoscenti that some areas of Washington governance can and must do better in 2023. We can think of three: executive, legislative and judicial.

Each of the three official branches of government has always provided us with insider wisdom on just what is wrong with the other two. And in the last week of 2022, we received some genuinely helpful wisdom from the highest perch of the most judiciously restrained of government's three branches—the Supreme Court. It came in a dissenting opinion to the court's conservative majority ruling on a case about America's growing crisis at the southern border. And it has provided us with a classic year-end insight into just how failures within the executive and legislative branches damaged our government—yet could have been averted through cooperative, humane initiatives.

Last week, the Supreme Court blocked a plan of President Joe Biden's administration to end the Trump's administration's so-called Title 42 rule that has been permitting the rapid expulsion of migrants without allowing their asylum requests to be processed. Trump's Title 42 was controversial because it used concerns about spreading COVID-19 as the basis for immediately expelling the migrants. The Court's conservative majority agreed with Republican officials in 19 states who argued Biden's ending of Title 42 would trigger a massive surge of migrants that would overrun U.S. capabilities at the southern border.

But that court ruling was pointedly challenged by a most unlikely source—Justice Neil Gorsuch, a staunch conservative appointed by President Donald Trump. Gorsuch joined the court's three liberal jurists in dissenting. And his opinion spoke blunt truth to power, criticizing failings within all three branches of government.

"The current border crisis is not a COVID crisis," Gorsuch wrote. "And courts should not be in the business of perpetuating administrative edicts designed for one emergency only because elected officials have failed to address a different emergency. We are a court of law, not policymakers of last resort."

Indeed, Gorsuch's conservative colleagues have too often functioned as de facto policymakers, making liberal use of their conservative activism (as in their ruling on abortion). But Gorsuch's point here was that the executive and legislative branches had failed to find workable fixes for the growing immigration crisis. There is no dispute about the key facts. Hundreds of thousands have been fleeing problems stemming from failing economies, criminal gang violence, and corrupt police and governments. But we have seen no solutions.

By MARTIN SCHRAM

Tribune News Service

Martin Schram, an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service, is a veteran Washington journalist, author and TV documentary executive. Readers may send him email at martin.schram@gmail.com.



Go to the website of the Department of Homeland Security, which is charged with securing our borders. Sadly, you will see no signs of creative crisis-fixing leadership from Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas. (And you never saw any from his Trump-era predecessors.) You have seen no evidence of problem-solving leadership from the United Nations or the nonfunctional Organization of American States. (Is anything more woeful than an AWOL OAS?)

When President Biden tasked Vice President Kamala Harris with leading efforts to solve the migrant crisis, I had hoped this would become her signature achievement. But we've seen no evidence of significant accomplishment.

Sadly, what we have seen is evidence of several Republicans playing politics with the lives of desperate migrants. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis loaded up buses and planes with migrants, shipped them north with no preparation and dumped them—just to get attention. In December's icy arctic winter, they just dumped migrants—some with no warm clothes—outside the vice president's residence. Why? Just to dramatize the fact that border states have been disproportionately shouldering the burden of this crisis.

Abbott and DeSantis have no shame. But we must now talk truth to our bathroom mirrors: Abbott and DeSantis did have a legitimate point that they wanted to make in the worst way. And they damn well did. Biden administration officials should have made sure this burden was being shared among all states.

So let's solve the problem now: Let President Biden start 2023 by convening a televised White House summit of Central American officials and congressional leaders of both parties. There, Biden will announce that from now on, the No. 1 way migrants will be granted U.S. asylum—and work permits—will be in highly visible lines at each U.S. embassy or at special ad hoc U.S. consulates in every Latin American nation. Migrants who are terrified by gang violence and fleeing in fear will be processed at a new asylum center to be established in Mexico, perhaps at its southern border with Guatemala.

Let the Biden White House make solving this solvable border crisis its most prominent New Year's resolution.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

To our soon-to-be-inaugurated officials: A call for more disability inclusion!

The other day, I came across a notice issued by the Office of Governor-Elect Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Governor-Elect David M. Apatang that states they are “seeking highly motivated and qualified individuals” for 29th gubernatorial appointee positions. First, I would like to commend the incoming administration for opening this pool for qualified individuals to have an opportunity to apply. This is a good start and step in the direction of change that the people of the CNMI had voted for. Now with the change also come challenges and I am hereby issuing a challenge for our incoming officials: to increase disability inclusion.

Changing our mindsets is a challenge in itself. Perhaps we must think outside of the box when solving issues that arise or are currently existing. Practicing what is known as “design thinking” or sharing multiple perspectives to form something new can assist us with problem-solving. For our incoming elected officials: this is your chance and opportunity to utilize

the versatile tool of design thinking and begin designing for disabilities first, not just the “norm.” Designing for disabilities first will not only allow us to find solutions but inclusive solutions that may often be better than when we design for the typical person.

Designing laws, policies, and procedures that are geared toward protecting individuals with disabilities, providing accessibility for programs/services, ensuring safety, inclusivity, and diversity is the step needed for a wider audience to avail, participate, and succeed in their daily lives and perhaps even for their goals. Now it is a reality that no one really does excel on their first try, but nonetheless that should not stop anyone from being the first to try.

So once again, I am challenging our incoming elected officials to take that first step and try. If you are unsure of where to start and how to begin, I invite you to come to the Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc. office where we

By CLEO NENING
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Cleo Nening is a programs coordinator at the Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc.



work directly with individuals with disabilities in the CNMI who are facing discrimination, rights violations, and/or abuse and neglect. Or meet with your constituents directly: the disability community and our Disability Network Partners to hear the unmet needs and potential solutions.

Everyone is creative, everyone can be a designer who can solve problems, and everyone has the chance to make a change. What type of change will you make?

For more information about disability laws that ensure access to public and private programs and services, contact NMPASI at (670) 235-7273/4 (voice)/(670) 287-0652 (text message)/ or visit us online at www.nmpasi.org.

I dedicated 2022 to making new friends. Here’s what I learned

On the morning of Dec. 7, my friend Jenny texted me and our friend Laura: “Last full moon of the year! Astrologically speaking it’s supposed to be fierce. I couldn’t tell you why but dream big!”

I’d met Jenny only two months before, but it felt like we’d known each other for decades. She rekindled a childhood sense of play and adventure. “Hell yes,” I replied. “I’d be down to do some witch-y stuff by the ocean tonight.” Laura

shared a GIF of a séance. I sent coordinates for a dirt road that I knew led to a secluded cove. With no real plan, we all agreed to meet there.

It felt like an appropriate journey to end 2022, the first year of my adult life that I’d spent intentionally single, focused on cultivating new and deeper friendships. I’d hoped to break toxic relationship patterns by abstaining from romantic entanglements, inspired partly by the essayist Melissa Febos, who wrote of a year of celibacy: “until that point—it was the best year of my life.”

By JEAN GUERRERO
Los Angeles Times

Jean Guerrero is an opinion columnist at the Los Angeles Times.



It was one of my best too. The year wasn’t without hardship, but I found myself richer in joy and connection than ever. It felt like a physical change: a space opening in my chest, deepening my capacity to give and receive love.

Sadly, close friendship is on the decline nationally. In 2021, the Survey Center on American Life found the percentage of Americans who report lacking a single close friend quadrupled from 1990, to 12% from 3%. Longer work hours and geographic mobility are to blame. In chasing personal growth and individual freedoms, many of us lost friendships.

I grew up in San Diego and spent years in Mexico. Many people I love from past chapters of my life live far away. We stay in touch through social media and messaging, but it’s not always consistent or deep. By the beginning of 2022, I was nostalgic for the kinds of friendships that were common before screens—embodied, in the real world. In Mexico, “carnal” means blood relation but is also slang for a close friend, like “in the flesh.”

I wanted those friendships: the 1980s and 1990s kind with their sleepovers, conspiratorial games and grand quests, as captured in Netflix’s “Stranger Things” when Max’s friends save her from a monster by playing her favorite song.

“They can’t help you, Max,” the monster says of her friends. “There’s a reason you hide from them.” The scene has 22 million views on YouTube. It turned Kate Bush’s 1985 “Running Up That Hill” into a top hit of 2022. Clearly this scene spoke to a shared reality of our moment. I wasn’t the only one who sensed that we’ve all let ourselves be consumed by something toxic. I wasn’t the only one hoping we might save one another.

We were all raised on stories about Prince Charmings and knights in shining armor, but in this world, it’s our friends who come to our rescue.

Sometimes life gets in the way and distance intervenes, and those special people can start to feel like strangers. The digital realm intended to bridge those gulfs can become the Upside Down, trapping us outside of reality.

I didn’t want to rely on screens for friendships. So in January 2022, when I moved back to the L.A. area for work, I decided to use social media to get off of social media—forging in-person connections. After I wrote a column about longboard dancing last New Year’s Eve, the professional longboarder Brandon DesJarlais messaged me on Instagram, inviting me to a weekly skate gathering in Santa Monica: Dock Session L.A.

I fell in love with the community, which has meetups across the world. Through it, I discovered Beyond the Board, Skate Hunnies, Vibe Ride L.A and other groups that build skate community. They do so with a purpose. “The world right now is very polarizing,” Brandon told me. “The strongest way I’ve seen people break through that and start to see people as people is by sharing positive, real-life experiences. It’s easy to sit behind your computer and go, ‘f— you people.’ But when you hang out and work through your fears together, it’s really hard to look that person in the eye and say that.”

Inspired, I created an all-wheels skate group in the South Bay with a friend from Dock Session. People found out about South Bay Skaters through modern means like Instagram and Heylo and through old-school word of mouth. We meet weekly to skate.

When I moved here, I also briefly tried Bumble BFF, the friend “dating” app. I was skeptical, but the first person I met through it was the séance-GIF-texting Laura, whom I saw as a kindred spirit: warm, ambitious, playful. We later met Jenny at a party, and the three of us became thick as thieves.

I hadn’t paid attention to the moon’s cycles for ages, since a 2017 trip to research my curandera bisabuela in Mexico. But that night was different. Jenny’s excitement was contagious. At the cove under the full moon, we meditated on our dreams for 2023. Gentle waves wished nearby. “I’m going in for a dunk,” Jenny said. I worried aloud about the cold, the rocky shore, the water’s unknown depth. But she was already stripping to her undergarments.

I watched anxiously as she ventured out and lay on large rocks at the water’s edge. She looked like a mermaid, soft waves rippling over her in the pearly moonlight. Her courage electrified me. “I’m going, too,” I said. Laura announced that she couldn’t be the only one who didn’t. We took turns.

After the water washed over me, I thought the tide was going to tug me into the deep; it was stronger than I expected. But I clung to the rocks like a crustacean and felt the ocean taking everything I no longer needed.

I felt more alive than ever, and grateful to my friends for the gift.

The last few years have been rough for most of us. Let’s make 2023 the year of having real-world adventures with new and old friends and committing to taking care of one another. Why should kids have all the fun?

Prelude, Opus 1 to 4, Coda

LITERARY NOOK

By JOEY CONNOLLY

Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey aka Pepe Batbon Connolly is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.

Young Younger Youngest

Prelude stanza B. Dylan’s Forever Young:

“May you grow up to be righteous
may you grow up to be true
may you always know the truth
and see the lights surrounding you
may you always be courageous
stand upright and be strong
and may you stay Forever Young.”

Opus #1 to #4

YOUNG Dumb and Full of Numb

teen years some numb to death’s reality
fearless wise guy filled with adventure
awareness of Mother Nature’s duality
guilty in confessional of thoughts impure

YOUNGER Than That Baby Fat

playground round and round in a whirl
as high up as I can get on the swings
interest grows between boy and girl
gluttonous consumption of sweet things

YOUNGEST Boy Baby Blessed

third boy in a row from Ma I know
she had 5 Cesarean births in all
fun with brothers and sisters in the snow
sometimes scared to walk down the hall

YOUTHFUL Years Gone in a Flash

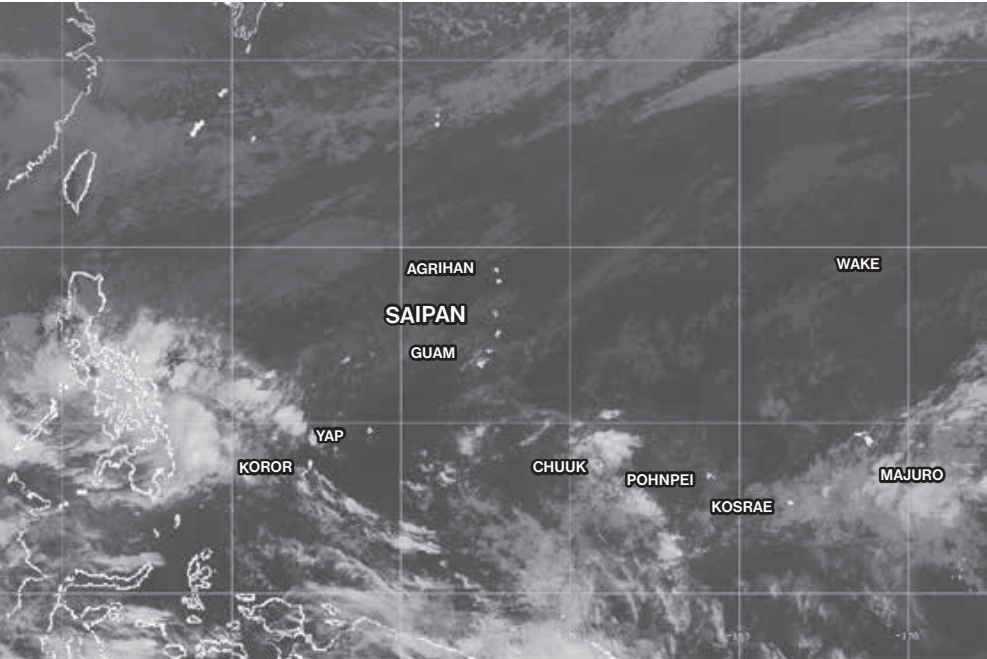
School memories of two orders of nuns
Sisters of St. Joseph and Mercy were the ones

CODA by Bob Dylan

“Look out the saints are comi’n through
and it’s all over now Baby Blue.”

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY		MONDAY	
Isolated showers. Mostly sunny		Mostly sunny		Partly sunny		Mostly sunny		A chance of showers. Partly sunny	
86°	77°	86°	77°	85°	78°	86°	78°	85°	78°
YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE									



PICTURE TIME: 8:48 AM, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite and radar imagery showed isolated showers over the Marianas this morning. Showers will increase during the day.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA			▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Scattered Thunderstorms	84° / 78°	
Palau	Scattered Thunderstorms	83° / 76°	
Yap	Scattered Thunderstorms	86° / 78°	
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	86° / 81°	
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	87° / 78°	
Kosrae	Scattered Thunderstorms	85° / 81°	
Majuro	Thunderstorms	83° / 78°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:44 AM	5:59 PM
Friday	6:44 AM	6:00 PM
Saturday	6:44 AM	6:01 PM
Sunday	6:45 AM	6:01 PM
Monday	6:45 AM	6:02 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	5:08 AM	4:29 PM
Friday	-	6:01 AM	5:20 PM
Saturday	-	6:52 AM	6:13 PM
Sunday	-	7:40 AM	7:05 PM
Monday	-	8:24 AM	7:56 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Rain/Wind	69° / 66°	
Beijing	Sunny	41° / 20°	
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	70° / 61°	
Honolulu	Showers	78° / 67°	
London	Showers	55° / 44°	
Los Angeles	Rain	60° / 54°	
Manila	Rain	84° / 77°	
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	73° / 55°	
Miami	Partly Cloudy	81° / 72°	
New York	Rain	63° / 51°	
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	49° / 39°	
Paris	Showers	58° / 51°	
Busan	Mostly Sunny	50° / 34°	
Rome	Partly Cloudy	60° / 45°	
Salem	Thunderstorms	70° / 46°	
San Francisco	Rain/Wind	59° / 53°	
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	38° / 21°	
Tokyo	Sunny	51° / 32°	
Washington, DC	Rain	66° / 51°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
12:50 AM	Low Tide	-0.45	
8:14 AM	High Tide	1.57	
1:16 PM	Low Tide	1.12	
5:45 PM	High Tide	1.58	

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2023							
DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily	UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5	UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR 111	5:30AM	7:25AM	Daily	PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau	UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily	UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
				UA189	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam	UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau	UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam
OZ624/701	3:50PM	10:35AM+1	3, 6 via Incheon	UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
				OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:20PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
TW308	3:15AM	6:55AM	1, 4, 5, 7	OZ623	9:00AM	2:20PM	3, 6
OZ624	3:50PM	7:40PM	3, 6	7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily	TW307	8:45PM	2:15AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7
LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. <i>(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)</i>							

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS					
INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF AUGUST 18, 2022					
SAIPAN TO TINIAN			TINIAN TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:00 A.M.	7:15 A.M.	(Except Sundays)	7:35 A.M.	7:50 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
9:50 A.M.	10:05 A.M.		10:25 A.M.	10:40 A.M.	
4:00 P.M.	4:15 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)	4:35 P.M.	4:50 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)
SAIPAN TO ROTA			ROTA TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:10 A.M.	8:40 A.M.		9:00 A.M.	9:30 A.M.	
1:45 P.M.	2:15 P.M.		2:35 P.M.	3:05 P.M.	
SAIPAN TO GUAM			GUAM TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:10 A.M.	12:00 P.M.		12:30 P.M.	1:20 P.M.	
5:15 P.M.	6:05 P.M.		6:40 P.M.	7:30 P.M.	

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

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Business

Running, soccer apparel now available in NMI

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The limited number of quality sports apparel in the CNMI was the genesis of online business FAT Sports NMI, which designs and produces quality running and soccer apparel, among others.

Jersh Angeles, a soccer coach for the NMI National Team and vlogger for the YouTube channel Flexin the 670, is now also a business owner with the establishments of online shop, FAT Sports NMI, in November 2022. Aside from playing soccer, he also loves running and fishing.

"My business offers customized sports apparel for teams or for individuals. Any design, we can make it. The only limitation is your imagination," said Angeles on his business.

As to how the idea for a local sports apparel business came to mind, Angeles said, "I met Franky Adi Thama (FAT), owner of FAT Sports in Indonesia and he provided free uniforms for the NMI National Team for the AFC U16

Tournament last October."

From there, Angeles worked with FAT Sports Indonesia and were able to provide the following: official uniforms for the NMI National Teams and NMIFA for four years; official uniforms for the Shirley's Football Club's Women's and Youth teams and coaches for two years; official uniforms for the TanHoldings Football Club's men's, women's, and youth teams and coaches for four years; official uniforms for the NMI Badminton National Team for the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022; polo shirts for the coaches and staff of the Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation for the tournament in Guam last June 2022; official uniforms for the Cavaliers Football Club youth team in El Paso, Texas; fishing shirts for the Zeppelin II fishing crew; goalkeeper gloves for the club teams and NMI National Team; and the official shirt of the Flexin the 670 YouTube channel.

Angeles' short term goal for his business is for his running jerseys to actually be worn



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
From left, Kaithlyn Chavez is wearing the FAT Sports NMI's limited edition purple lei singlet in women's size medium; Mateo Angeles is wearing the FAT Sports NMI's limited edition Saipan running Sea Blue shirt in kid's medium; Orrin Pharin sports the FAT Sports NMI's limited edition shirt in men's large.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Jersh Angeles, owner of the running and soccer apparel FAT Sports NMI, is seen in his limited edition Saipan Running shirt.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Southwest apologizes, gives customers frequent-flyer points

DALLAS (AP)—Southwest Airlines is trying to make travelers who were caught in its surge of canceled flights over the holidays feel a bit better about the airline by giving them 25,000 frequent-flyer points.

The airline says the points are worth more than \$300 in flights.

Southwest included the offer in a letter — another apology for the meltdown — from CEO Bob Jordan.

"I know that no amount of apologies can undo your experience," Jordan wrote. He added the airline is acting "with great urgency" to process refunds, return lost bags and handle requests for reimbursement of costs incurred by stranded travelers.

Dallas-based Southwest canceled more than 15,000 flights between Dec. 22 and Dec. 30, according to tracking service FlightAware. The flight disruptions began with a winter storm that swept across the country. While other airlines recovered after a couple days, Southwest continued to struggle with crews and airplanes that were stranded far from where they were supposed to be.

No cash, no bank heists in Denmark; criminals now go online

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP)—For the first time in years, Denmark hasn't recorded a single bank robbery. There wouldn't have been much point.

Cash transactions in the Nordic country have become virtually obsolete, with Danes increasingly opting to use cards and smart phones for payments.

The Danish bank employees' union on Tuesday welcomed the news that 2022 had been robbery-free.

"It is just amazing. Because (robberies) put an absolutely extreme strain on the affected employees every time (they) happened," spokesman Steen Lund Olsen said in a statement.

Finance Denmark, the banking sector's association, said only about 20 bank branches across the country have cash holdings. But then the number of bank branches has fallen from 219 in 1991 to 56 in 2021, it said.

News reports noted that cash withdrawals in Denmark have been dropping by about three-quarters every year for the past six years.

German inflation hits 7.9% in 2022, highest in over 70 years

BERLIN (AP)—Germany has recorded its highest annual inflation in more than 70 years, according to preliminary data released Tuesday by the country's Federal Statistical Office.

Surging energy and food prices due to Russia's attack on Ukraine saw full-year inflation reach 7.9% in 2022. The last time annual inflation was near that level was in 1951, when it stood at 7.6% as the post-war economic boom began. Annual inflation in 2021 stood at 3.1%.

The preliminary data showed that inflation slowed somewhat in December, to 8.6% compared to the same month in the previous year, as one-off government payments to help consumers pay their heating and gas bills took effect. In October monthly inflation had reached a record 10.4% before dipping to 10% in November.

Rising prices reduce consumers' spending power. Many German unions have successfully campaigned for higher-than-average pay rises in recent months to offset the impact of inflation.

during races—unlike the "finisher shirt" which is given as a prize and worn after a race. "I want to prove that my running jerseys are runner's approved and top performance because its material is breathable, lightweight, and safe (moisture wicking)."

His long-term goal is to open up a sports store "to not just cater to the local people but also to the tourists where they can bring home a piece of

FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried pleads not guilty to fraud

NEW YORK (AP)—FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried pleaded not guilty in Manhattan federal court Tuesday to charges that he cheated investors and looted customer deposits on his cryptocurrency trading platform as a judge set a tentative trial date for October.

Bankman-Fried, 30, denied charges accusing him of illegally diverting massive sums of customer money from FTX to make lavish real estate purchases, donate money to politicians and make risky trades at Alameda Research, his cryptocurrency hedge fund trading firm.

Bankman-Fried's attorney, Mark Cohen, announced his client's plea, saying: "He pleads not guilty to all counts."

Afterward, Judge Lewis A. Kaplan set a tentative trial date of Oct. 2, saying he might move it forward or backward a day or two. A prosecutor

NMI back to their country."

So far, FAT Sports NMI was able to release the first batch of the Limited Edition Saipan Running shirts and singlets to local runners/individuals.

To take a look at the extensive designs of the jerseys and other products available, check out FAT Sports NMI on Facebook and @fatsports_nmi on Instagram.

For inquiries, contact FAT Sports NMI on Facebook or Instagram.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The official Tan Holdings Football Club's uniform provided by FAT Sports NMI.



estimated it would take the government a month to present its case to a jury, while a defense lawyer projected putting on a case lasting two to three weeks.

Wearing a backpack, Bankman-Fried marched through a crush of cameras as he entered the courthouse on a rainy day to make his first appearance before Kaplan. In the courtroom, Bankman-Fried appeared relaxed through most of the half-hour-long proceeding, occasionally speaking to a lawyer next to him. When he left court, he did not speak to reporters outside.

After Bankman-Fried pleaded not guilty, the judge discussed with lawyers a schedule for proceeding toward trial, setting April dates for defense lawyers to submit arguments challenging the validity of the charges and for prosecutors to respond to them. Oral arguments were set for May 18.

The judge also added to Bankman-Fried's bail conditions by banning him from accessing or transferring cryptocurrency or assets of FTX or Alameda Research or any assets purchased with funds from the companies.

He did so after Assistant U.S. Attorney Danielle Sassoon said Bankman-Fried had worked with foreign regulators to transfer FTX assets to them after FTX declared bankruptcy and he knew U.S. bankruptcy authorities were also interested in those assets.

Sassoon said Bankman-Fried expressed to a co-conspirator that he knew there was competition between U.S. bankruptcy authorities and foreign regulators and he wanted to get the assets to the foreign regulators in part because he thought they'd be more lenient with him and he might be able to regain control of his business.

Nation

McCarthy's fight with GOP's right flank stalls speaker bid

WASHINGTON (AP)—Failing to elect party leader Kevin McCarthy as the new speaker of the House, Republicans adjourned in disarray Tuesday night, ending a raucous first day of the new Congress but hoping to somehow regroup Wednesday from his historic defeat.

The abrupt end to a long, messy Day One showed there is no easy way ahead for McCarthy, who promised to fight to the finish to claim the gavel despite opposition from the chamber's most conservative members. Needing 218 votes in the full House, McCarthy got just 203 in two rounds — less even than Democrat Hakeem Jeffries in the GOP-controlled chamber — and fared even worse with 202 in round three.

Tensions rose as night fell

on the new House majority, and all other business came to a halt. The House agreed to return at noon Wednesday.

"Kevin McCarthy is not going to be a speaker," declared Rep. Bob Good, R-Va., one of the holdouts.

McCarthy had pledged a "battle on the floor" for as long as it took to overcome right-flank fellow Republicans who were refusing to give him their votes. But it was not at all clear how the embattled GOP leader could rebound after becoming the first House speaker nominee in 100 years to fail to win the gavel with his party in the majority.

Without a speaker, the House cannot fully form — swearing in its members, naming its committee chairmen, engaging in floor proceedings and launching investigations



House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., speaks after a closed-door meeting with the GOP Conference as he pursues the speaker of the House role when the 118th Congress convenes, Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2023, in Washington.

FDA finalizes rule expanding availability of abortion pills

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday finalized a rule change that broadens availability of abortion pills to many more pharmacies, including large chains and mail-order companies.

The Biden administration partially implemented the change last year, announcing it would no longer enforce a long-standing requirement that women pick up the medicine in person. Tuesday's action formally updates the drug's labeling to allow many more retail pharmacies to dispense the pills, so long as they complete a certification process.

The change could expand access at both brick-and-mortar stores and online pharmacies. Women can get a prescription via telehealth consultation with a health professional, and then receive the pills through the mail, where permitted by law.

Still, the rule change's impact has been blunted by numerous state laws limiting abortion broadly and the pills specifically. Legal experts foresee years of court battles over access to the pills, as abortion-rights proponents bring test cases to challenge state restrictions.

For more than 20 years, the FDA labeling had limited dispensing to a subset of specialty offices and clinics, due to safety concerns. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the FDA temporarily suspended the in-person requirement. The agency later said a new scientific review by agency staff supported easing access, concurring with numerous medical societies that had long said the

restriction wasn't necessary.

Two drugmakers that make brand-name and generic versions of abortion pills requested the latest FDA label update. Agency rules require a company to file an application before modifying dispensing restrictions on drugs.

Danco Laboratories, which sells branded Mifeprex, said in a statement the change "is critically important to expanding access to medication abortion services and will provide healthcare providers" with another option for prescribing the drug.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists called the update an "important step" forward.

"Although the FDA's announcement today will not solve access issues for every person seeking abortion care, it will allow more patients who need mifepristone for medication abortion additional options to secure this vital drug," the group said in a statement.

More than half of U.S. abortions are now done with pills rather than surgery, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights.

The FDA in 2000 approved mifepristone to terminate pregnancies of up to 10 weeks, when used with a second drug, misoprostol. Mifepristone is taken first to dilate the cervix and block the hormone progesterone, which is needed to sustain a pregnancy. Misoprostol is taken 24 to 48 hours later, causing the uterus to contract and expel pregnancy tissue.

of the Biden administration.

"We all came here to get things done," said the second-ranking Republican, Rep. Steve Scalise, in a rousing speech urging his colleagues to drop their protest.

Railing against Democratic President Joe Biden's agenda, Scalise, himself a possible GOP compromise choice, said, "We can't start fixing those problems until we elect Kevin McCarthy our next speaker."

It was a tumultuous start to the new Congress and pointed

to a difficult road ahead with Republicans now in control of the House. Lawmakers' families waited around, as what's normally a festive day descended into chaos, with kids playing in the aisles or squirming in parents' arms. A new generation of conservative Republicans, many aligned with Donald Trump's Make America Great Again agenda, want to upend business as usual in Washington, and were committed to stopping McCarthy's rise without concessions to their priorities.

Idaho slayings suspect agrees to extradition to face charges

STROUDSBURG, Pa.

(AP)—A criminology graduate student accused of the November slayings of four University of Idaho students agreed Tuesday to be extradited from Pennsylvania, where he was arrested last week, to face charges in Idaho.

Bryan Kohberger, a 28-year-old doctoral student at Washington State University — a short drive from the murder scene across the state border — will be transported to Idaho within 10 days.

Students at the University of Idaho and nearby residents lived in fear for weeks as authorities seemed stumped by the mysterious and brutal stabbings on Nov. 13. Idaho police appeared to make a breakthrough, however, after searching for a white sedan seen around the time of the killings and analyzing DNA evidence at the crime scene.

Investigators have said they are still looking for a murder weapon and a motive for the killings. More details about the case are expected to be released after Kohberger arrives in Idaho and an af-

fidavit is unsealed.

But attorneys, law enforcement officers and others involved in the case won't be able to discuss the affidavit or other court documents after an Idaho magistrate judge on Tuesday evening issued a so-called "gag order" barring officials from talking publicly about many aspects of the case outside of court.

Judges sometimes issue the orders when they fear that pre-trial publicity could prevent a defendant from getting a fair trial.

Wearing a red jumpsuit with his hands shackled in front of him, Kohberger showed little emotion during Tuesday's brief hearing in a Pennsylvania courtroom in which he acknowledged facing four counts of first-degree murder and a burglary charge.

Kohberger, who was arrested by state police at his parents' home in eastern Pennsylvania last Friday, will be held at a jail in Monroe County, Pennsylvania, until his extradition.

Kohberger's parents and sisters sat in the front row of the courtroom gallery, behind

"The American people are watching, and it's a good thing," said Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, who nominated fellow conservative Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio as an alternative for speaker.

It was the second time conservatives pushed forward a reluctant Jordan, the McCarthy rival-turned-ally, who earlier had risen to urge his colleagues — even those who backed Jordan — to vote for McCarthy.

"We have to rally around him, come together," Jordan said.

the defense table. His mother and his sister Melissa broke down as he walked into the courtroom, sobbing quietly and holding one another. A sheriff's deputy brought them a box of tissues. Kohberger glanced at his family briefly as he was led out of the courtroom.

Latah County prosecutors in Idaho have said they believe Kohberger broke into the victims' home near the university campus intending to commit murder.

The students were: Kaylee Goncalves, 21, of Rathdrum, Idaho; Madison Mogen, 21, of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Xana Kernodle, 20, of Post Falls, Idaho; and Ethan Chapin, 20, of Conway, Washington. They were close friends and members of the university's Greek system.

Mogen, Goncalves and Kernodle lived in the three-story rental home with two other roommates. Kernodle and Chapin were dating, and he had been visiting the house that night.

The killings have left the rural town of Moscow, Idaho deeply shaken, and police have

In all, a core group of 19 Republicans — and then 20 — voted for Jordan, denying McCarthy the majority he needs.

Smiling through it all, McCarthy appeared intent on simply trying to wear down his colleagues. Earlier, he strode into the chamber, posed for photos and received a standing ovation from many on his side of the aisle. He was nominated by the third-ranking Republican, Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York, who said the Californian from gritty Bakersfield "has what it takes" to lead the House.

But a challenge was quickly raised by Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz., a conservative former leader of the Freedom Caucus, who was nominated by a fellow conservative as speaker.

The mood was tense, at least on the Republican side, as lawmakers rose from their seats, in lengthy in-person voting. Democrats were upbeat as they cast their own historic votes for their leader, Jeffries of New York.

In the first-round tally, McCarthy won 203 votes, with 10 for Biggs and nine for other Republicans. In the second, it was 203 for McCarthy and 19 for Jordan. On the third vote, McCarthy had 202 to Jordan's 20. Democrat Jeffries had the most, 212 votes, but no nominee won a majority.

released few details about the investigation. For weeks the Moscow Police Department faced heavy criticism for telling frightened residents that there was no great risk to the community, even though a suspect had not been named.

University officials hired extra security to escort students across campus, but nearly half of the 11,500-student body temporarily left campus for the perceived safety of online classes.

Would-be sleuths attempted to fill the void with their own theories online — some of them targeting friends and acquaintances of the slain students with hurtful and inaccurate allegations.

The chief public defender in Monroe County said his client is eager to be exonerated. Kohberger should be presumed innocent and "not tried in the court of public opinion," said the public defender, Jason LaBar.

After Tuesday's hearing, LaBar described Kohberger as "an ordinary guy," and said that after his extradition he would be represented by the chief public defender in Kootenai County, Idaho.

Asia

Beijing threatens response to 'unacceptable' virus measures



Visitors are reflected on a window pane as a man counts Chinese currency notes at a shop selling tea in Qianmen, a popular tourist spot in Beijing, Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2023.

BEIJING (AP)—The Chinese government sharply criticized COVID-19 testing requirements imposed on visitors from China and threatened countermeasures against countries involved, which include the U.S. and several European nations.

"We believe that the entry restrictions adopted by some countries targeting China lack scientific basis, and some excessive practices are even more unacceptable," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a daily briefing Tuesday.

"We are firmly opposed to attempts to manipulate the

COVID measures for political purposes and will take countermeasures based on the principle of reciprocity," she said. Mao did not specify what steps China might take.

The comments were China's sharpest to date on the issue. Australia and Canada this week joined a growing list of countries requiring travelers from China to take a COVID-19 test prior to boarding their flight, as China battles a nationwide outbreak of the coronavirus after abruptly easing restrictions that were in place for much of the pandemic.

Other countries including the U.S., India, Japan, South Korea and several European nations have announced tougher COVID-19 measures on travelers from China amid concerns over a lack of data on infections in China and fears that new variants may emerge.

China has had some of the toughest entry requirements for people arriving from abroad. It is about to drop a mandatory five-day quarantine for all arrivals but will still require a negative COVID-19 test within 48 hours of the flight.

"The leaders will celebrate the unprecedented strength of the U.S.-Japan Alliance and will set the course for their partnership in the year ahead."

The two leaders last met in Bali, Indonesia, during November's Group of 20 summit.

Police say gunman kills 2 Pakistani intelligence officers

MULTAN, Pakistan (AP)—A gunman shot and killed two intelligence officers in an attack outside a roadside restaurant in eastern Pakistan on Tuesday before fleeing, police and security officials said.

Murtaza Bhatti, a senior police officer in the Punjab province district of Khanewal, said the attack happened when the two officers were parking their vehicle.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack on the officers, who were known for arresting Pakistani Taliban and other militants. They were also known for their expertise in investigating and solving

complicated cases, including gun and bomb attacks in the country.

Officials said one of the slain officers was the director of the provincial counter-terrorism department, which has played a key role in arresting Pakistani Taliban. The militant group has stepped up attacks on security forces in recent months after unilaterally ending a monthlong cease-fire with the Pakistan government in November.

The Pakistani Taliban are separate but allied with the Afghan Taliban, who seized power in neighboring Afghanistan in 2021 as U.S. and NATO troops withdrew after 20 years of war.

Also on Tuesday, the Afghan Taliban's chief spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said that Afghanistan wants good relations with all its neighboring countries, including Pakistan. But he also asked Islamabad to refrain from making provocative statements that can lead to mistrust.

World

Russia, shaken by Ukrainian strike, could step up drone use

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Emergency crews on Tuesday sifted through the rubble of a building struck by Ukrainian rockets, killing at least 63 Russian soldiers barracked there, in the latest blow to the Kremlin's war strategy as Ukraine says Moscow's tactics could be shifting.

An Associated Press video of the scene in Makiivka, a town in the partially Russian-occupied eastern Donetsk region, showed five cranes and emergency workers removing big chunks of concrete under a clear blue sky.

In the attack, which apparently happened last weekend, Ukrainian forces fired rockets from a U.S.-provided HIMARS multiple launch system, according to a Russian Defense Ministry statement.

It was one of the deadliest attacks on the Kremlin's forces since the war began more than 10 months ago and an embarrassment that stirred

renewed criticism inside Russia of the way the war is being conducted.

The Russian statement Monday about the attack provided few other details. Other, unconfirmed reports put the death toll much higher.

The Strategic Communications Directorate of Ukraine's armed forces claimed Sunday that around 400 mobilized Russian soldiers were killed in a vocational school building in Makiivka and about 300 more were wounded. That claim couldn't be independently verified. The Russian statement said the strike occurred "in the area of Makiivka" and didn't mention the vocational school.

Satellite photos analyzed by The AP show the apparent aftermath of the strike. An image from Dec. 20 showed the building standing. One from Jan. 2 showed it in ruins. Other days had intense cloud cover, making it impossible to see the site by standard satellite imagery.

Vigils for soldiers killed in

the strike took place in two Russian cities Tuesday, the state RIA Novosti agency reported.

In Samara, in southwestern Russia, locals gathered for an Orthodox service in memory of the dead. The service was followed by a minute's silence, and flowers were laid at a Soviet-era war memorial, RIA reported.

Unconfirmed reports in Russian-language media said the victims were mobilized reservists from the region.

With the fighting raging much longer than anticipated by the Kremlin, and becoming bogged down in a war of attrition amid a Ukrainian counteroffensive backed by Western-supplied weapons, Russian President Vladimir Putin is mulling ways of regaining momentum.

In a video address late Tuesday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his country needs to strengthen its defenses in the face of what he described as Russian plans for a new offensive.

WORLD BRIEFS

Iran president vows vengeance 3 years after general's death

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—Iran's president on Tuesday vowed to avenge the killing of the country's top general on the third anniversary of his death, as the government rallied its supporters in mourning amid months of anti-government protests.

Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the architect of Iran's regional military activities, was killed in a U.S. drone strike in neighboring Iraq. He is hailed as a national icon among supporters of Iran's theocracy, while the protesters have torn down billboards and defaced other images of him.

Addressing a ceremony marking the general's death, President Ebrahim Raisi said those behind it "should know that retaliation is obvious," adding that "there will be no relief for murderers and accomplices."

He said Soleimani had defeated "U.S. hegemony" and praised him for his role in leading Iran-backed forces against the Islamic State extremist group. Soleimani was also mourned in neighboring Iraq alongside Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, an Iraqi militia leader killed in the

same strike. Iranian-backed militias make up the bulk of Iraq's state-supported Popular Mobilization Forces.

Iran responded to the killing of Soleimani by launching a barrage of missiles at U.S. bases in Iraq, causing dozens of brain concussion injuries but no deaths among U.S. soldiers stationed there. Iranian officials have repeatedly vowed to take further steps and imposed sanctions on individuals accused of taking part in the operation.

UN Security Council welcomes new members; 2 are first-timers

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland got a formal welcome into the U.N. Security Council on Tuesday, taking the two-year seats they won unopposed in June.

In a tradition that Kazakhstan started in 2018, the five countries' ambassadors installed their national flags Tuesday alongside those of other members outside the council chambers.

Mozambican Ambassador Pedro Comissário Afonso of Mozambique called it "a historic date" and Swiss Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl said

she felt "a deep sense of humility and responsibility" as their countries marked their first-ever terms on U.N.'s most powerful body. Malta joined for a second time, Ecuador a fourth and Japan a record 12th.

China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States are permanent, veto-wielding members of the group. Its 10 other members are elected by the 193-nation General Assembly for staggered, two-year terms. They're allocated by global regions.

To many countries, winning a council seat is considered a signature diplomatic accomplishment that can raise a nation's global profile and afford small countries a bigger voice than they might otherwise have in the major international peace and security issues of the day.

The council deploys peacekeeping missions, can approve sanctions and speaks out — sometimes — on conflicts and flashpoints, while also surveying such thematic issues as terrorism and arms control. While many matters are perennials on the agenda, council members also can use the platform to spotlight emerging concerns or topics of particular interest to them.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Biden to host Japan's Kishida for talks on NKorea, economy

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Joe Biden will host Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the White House later this month for economic and security consultations, the U.S. administration announced Tuesday.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the Jan. 13 meeting will include discussions of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs, amid concerns over the potential for another nuclear test by the reclusive nation. Also on the agenda: economic issues, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, climate change and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

"President Biden will reiterate his full support for Japan's recently released National Security Strategy, its presidency of the G7, and its term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council," Jean-Pierre said.

Environment

Bill Gates made 2022's biggest charitable donation

By MARIA DI MENTO
Chronicle of Philanthropy

The Chronicle of Philanthropy's annual list of the 10 largest charitable gifts announced by individuals or their foundations totaled nearly \$9.3 billion in 2022. The contributions went to large, well-established institutions, three of them private foundations and three universities to support environmental sustainability, children's mental health, and stem-cell research. The other gifts backed cancer research and treatment, housing efforts, youth programs, and reproductive health.

Two of the gifts exceeded

\$1 billion, and six of the eight donors (one donor made three gifts) are multibillionaires. The combined net worth of those six donors is just over \$325 billion.

Topping the list is Bill Gates, who gave \$5 billion to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to back the grantmaker's work in global health, development, policy and advocacy, and U.S. education. Gates, whose net worth is estimated at \$104 billion, attracted attention in July when he announced he was giving \$20 billion to the foundation he runs with his former wife, Melinda French Gates. However, foundation offi-

cials confirmed in December that three-fourths of that \$20 billion went toward paying off the \$15 billion he and French Gates had pledged in July 2021. The remaining \$5 billion was a new infusion to the foundation.

Ann and John Doerr came in second with a \$1.1 billion donation they're giving through their Benificus Foundation to Stanford University to launch the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability, an effort to tackle the world's most urgent climate and sustainability challenges. The new school will focus on eight areas of

scholarship: climate change, Earth and planetary sciences, energy technology, sustainable cities, the natural environment, food and water security, human society and behavior, and human health and the environment.

The new school will house several academic departments and interdisciplinary institutes. It will also be home to a "sustainability accelerator," which, among other efforts, will award grants to researchers and others to develop new technologies in environmental sustainability and related arenas, advance new policies, and

support partnerships.

John Doerr is a venture-capital investor who made his mark and much of his fortune as an early backer of Silicon Valley technology giants like Sun Microsystems, Amazon, and Google. Today he serves as chairman of the investment firm Kleiner Perkins, and his net worth stands at a little more than \$9 billion.

Coming in third are Jackie and Mike Bezos, the mother and stepfather of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. The couple gave the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center \$710.5 million to build 36 research labs and an additional large research facility. The grant will also

support the cancer center's clinical trials and immunotherapy research over the next 10 years.

The couple have been fairly low-profile philanthropists until recently. Yet Jackie Bezos has been closely involved in several nonprofit projects over the years. She created the Bezos Scholars Program at the Aspen Institute, the Aspen Challenge, and Students Rebuild, all of which are education programs for various age groups. Mike Bezos spent 32 years working as an engineer and manager with the oil and gas giant Exxon Mobil before retiring and turning his attention to the couple's giving.



Gates

UK climate group calls temporary halt to disruptive protests

LONDON (AP) — The U.K. division of climate change protest group Extinction Rebellion says its activists would temporarily stop blocking busy roads, gluing themselves to buildings and engaging in other acts of civil disobedience because such methods have not achieved their desired effects.

"As we ring in the new year, we make a controversial resolution to temporarily shift away from public disruption as a primary tactic," the group said in a New Year's Eve website post. "We recognize and celebrate the power of disruption to raise the alarm and believe that constantly evolving tactics is a necessary approach."

To further its goals of getting politicians, corporations and the public "to end the fossil fuel era," the group said it would instead focus on broadening its support with actions such as getting 100,000 people to surround the Houses of Parliament in London on April 21.

"In a time when speaking out and taking action are criminalized, building collective power, strengthening in number and thriving through bridge-building is a radical act," the website post said. "This year, we prioritize attendance over arrest and relationships over roadblocks, as we stand together and become impossible to ignore."

In response to protests by Extinction Rebellion and other direct-action groups, Britain's Conservative gov-

ernment last year toughened police powers to shut down disruptive protests and increased penalties for obstructing roads, which can now bring a prison sentence.

Even tougher moves were rejected by Parliament, but the government planned to try again to pass a law that would make it a criminal offense to interfere with infrastructure. Civil liberties groups have decried the moves as restrictions on free speech and the right to protest.

In the four years since Extinction Rebellion formed, the group has attracted both praise and criticism with climate demonstrations that were designed to be disruptive and often led to mass arrests while succeeding in snarling road and port traffic.

In April, British police said six people were arrested after activists climbed onto an oil tanker and blocked four London bridges to protest investments in fossil fuel. Extinction Rebellion said at the time that two former British Olympic athletes, gold medal-winning canoeist Etienne Stott and sailor Laura Baldwin, were among the protesters.

In its Sunday post titled "We Quit," the U.K. branch of Extinction Rebellion said that while the group has helped bring about "a seismic shift" in the climate conversation, "very little has changed. Emissions continue to rise and our planet is dying at an accelerated rate."

Alpine slopes face snow shortage in unseasonably warm winter



LAURENT GILLIERON

Skiers speed down a ski slope with artificial snow in the middle of a snowless field, at 1600 meters above sea level, in the alpine resort of Villars-sur-Ollon, Switzerland, Saturday, Dec. 31, 2022. Sparse snowfall and unseasonably warm weather in much of Europe is allowing green grass to blanket many mountaintops across the region where snow might normally be. It has caused headaches for ski slope operators and aficionados of Alpine white this time of year. (Laurent Gillieron/Keystone via AP)

GENEVA (AP)—Much of the Alps just don't look right for this time of year. Sparse snowfall and unseasonably warm winter weather in Europe's central mountains are allowing grass to blanket hill-sides across the region, causing headaches for ski slope operators and aficionados of Alpine white.

Patches of grass, rock and dirt were visible Monday in some of Europe's skiing meccas — like Innsbruck in Austria, Villars-sur-Ollon and Crans-Montana in Switzerland, and Germany's Lenggries and far beyond. The dearth of snow has revived concerns about temperature upheaval linked to climate change.

On a swath stretching from

France to Poland, but with the Alps at the center, many parts of Europe were enjoying short-sleeve weather. A weather map showed Poland racking up daily highs in the double digits Celsius — or more than 50 Fahrenheit — in recent days.

It's a sharp contrast to the frigid weather and blizzards in parts of the United States late last year.

Swiss state forecaster MeteoSuisse pointed to some of the hottest temperatures ever this time of year. A weather station in Delemont, in the Jura range on the French border, already hit a record average daily temperature of 18.1 degrees Celsius (nearly 65 Fahrenheit) on the first day of

the year, over 2-1/2 degrees Celsius higher than the previous record high for January. Other cities and towns followed suit with records.

MeteoSuisse quipped on its blog: "... this turn of the new year could almost make you forget that it's the height of winter."

Forecaster Anick Haldimann of MeteoSuisse said a persistent weather system that brought in warmer air from the west and southwest has lingered, locking in warmer temperatures expected to last through the week. While slopes above 2,000 meters (over 6,500 feet) have gotten snow, lower down, "the order of the day is patience" for skiing buffs, she said.

The shortage has been par-

ticularly burdensome around Switzerland's Adelboden, which is set to host World Cup skiing on Saturday, and generally draws 25,000 fans for a single day of racing. Resorts like these look for such races to offer up bucolic wintertime images to draw amateur skiers, but grassy, brown sides to the course can mar the landscape — and dampen the appeal.

Course director Toni Hadi acknowledged that the race will be run on 100% artificial snow this year.

"The climate is a bit changing but what should we do here? Shall we stop with life?" he said by phone, noting that other challenges such as the coronavirus pandemic and war show "life is not easy" these days.

Life & Style

Sheriff: No foul play in 'Avengers' star snow tractor injury

RENO, Nev. (AP)—The serious injuries actor Jeremy Renner suffered while using a snow tractor to free a snow-bound motorist on a private mountain road near Lake Tahoe appear to be a "tragic accident," the sheriff in Reno said Tuesday.

The 51-year-old "Avengers" star was seriously hurt when he was run over by his own snowcat after using it to free a vehicle driven by a family member that became stuck in 3 feet (0.9 meters) of fresh mountain snow on New Year's Day, Washoe County Sheriff Darin Balaam said.

An investigation is continuing but there were no signs of foul play or any indication Ren-

ner was impaired at the time of the Sunday morning incident, Balaam told reporters.

"At this point in the investigation ... we believe this is a tragic accident," the sheriff said. "He was being a great neighbor and he was plowing those roads for his neighbors."

The accident left Renner in critical but stable condition with chest and orthopedic injuries, according to a publicist and sheriff's officials who said Renner was flown by medical helicopter about 25 miles (40.23 kilometers) to a Reno hospital.



Renner

About the same time reporters were gathering with Balaam on Tuesday, Renner posted an Instagram photo of himself in a hospital bed and a message, missing an apostrophe.

"Thank you all for your kind words," it said. "Im too messed up now to type. But I send love to you all."

Balaam said Renner had used his Pistenbully snow groomer, a 7-ton vehicle he owns, to tow another personal vehicle that had become snowbound on a private road he shares with neighbors.

"After successfully towing

his personal vehicle from its stuck location, Mr. Renner got out of his (snowcat) to speak to his family member," Balaam said. "The Pistenbully started to roll. In an effort to stop (it), Mr. Renner attempts to climb back into the driver's seat. It's at this point that Mr. Renner is run over."

The sheriff said the snowcat was impounded and is being examined by investigators "for any mechanical failure and why it started to roll."

"He was helping someone stranded in the snow," Reno Mayor Hillary Schieve told the Reno Gazette-Journal Monday night. She said she and the actor are friends and that she was called about the accident shortly

after it happened near the Mt. Rose Highway that connects Reno to Lake Tahoe.

"He is always helping others," the mayor told the newspaper.

Balaam said Tuesday that it took first responders from Reno more than 30 minutes to traverse the several miles of snowy road to reach Renner on the private road off the highway.

As many as 20 vehicles had been abandoned on the roadway while 3 feet of fresh snow fell overnight, slowing the fire engine and ambulance response.

A publicist for Renner said in

a statement Monday that he suffered blunt chest trauma and orthopedic injuries and remained in critical but stable condition in intensive care unit following surgery at a Reno hospital.

Renner plays Hawkeye, a sharp-shooting member of the superhero Avengers squad in Marvel's sprawling movie and television universe.

Balaam said the two-time acting Oscar nominee has become an honorary deputy sheriff in Reno through his participation in the county's "Shop with the Sheriff" program that raises money for children to shop for Christmas gifts.

Rose Parade avoids California rain as it welcomes New Year

PASADENA, Calif. (AP)—Flower-covered floats, marching bands and equestrian units celebrated the New Year on a chilly but dry Monday as the 134th Rose Parade slipped through a gap in California's siege of drenching storms.

Pasadena's annual floral spectacle offered the optimistic theme of "Turning the Corner" for 2023, and former U.S. Rep. Gabby Giffords of Arizona, who survived a 2011 shooting, served as grand marshal.

"The New Year is a time for renewal, an opportunity for a fresh start," Tournament of Roses President Amy Wainwright told the television audience.

The parade, which by tradition is held on Jan. 2 when New Year's Day falls on a Sunday, kicked off with the



(AP Photo/Michael Owen Baker)

The Donate Life float, winner of the Sweepstakes Award, rolls down Colorado Boulevard at the 134th Rose Parade in Pasadena, Calif., Monday, Jan. 2, 2023.

Los Angeles band Fitz and the Tantrums! performing "Let Yourself Free" and a

crowd-pleasing flyby of two U.S. Air Force B-1B jets.

Rain has rarely fallen on the

parade, but this year it came close. Downpours pounded Southern California over the weekend—and rain returned Monday evening during the Rose Bowl college football game between Utah and Penn State.

But earlier in the day, parade participants and thousands of spectators avoided a soaking.

Giffords rolled down the 5.5-mile (8.8-mile) route in a flower-decked antique convertible, accompanied by her husband, Democratic U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona.

Marching bands came from across the U.S. and around the world.

The Riverside County, California, sheriff's mounted unit was led by a riderless horse in honor of Deputy Isaiah Cordeiro, 32, who was slain during a traffic stop on Dec. 29.

Discovery of family secret troubles surviving relative

DEAR ABBY: While doing some genealogy research during the pandemic, I came across my maternal grandfather's death certificate. I knew he had died at a fairly young age during the Depression. But I was shocked to learn that he had committed suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning in his car in the garage of their home. His little restaurant was not doing well, and money was scarce. I imagine he was desperate and depressed.

My mother had anxiety issues, which may have been the result of her father's suicide or a genetic issue. Should I share this information with my adult children? Could it be helpful to them in any way? My mother didn't share this with me. I have a close relationship with my children, and this secret is troubling me.

WITHHOLDING INFORMATION

DEAR WITHHOLDING: Your mother didn't share the details of her father's death because, back then, suicide was considered a source of shame. The stress of keeping her father's suicide a secret may have contributed to her anxiety. Fortunately, attitudes are more enlightened today, and the subject of suicide can be discussed.

Because this secret is troubling you, you should definitely bring it out in the open. It might be helpful to your children to know that depression may run in the family.

DEAR ABBY: My husband's brother and his wife visit every six weeks and are guests in our home. My husband is very close to his brother, and I know the time they spend together is a blessing to both of them. My problem is his wife. She drives me crazy. She wants to get into my business and is very outspoken.

My husband's parents and his other brother have passed. Other members of the family have room for them to stay, but I was the only one who opened my home to them. I don't want to cause problems in the family, but she criticizes what we watch on TV and tells us what she prefers to watch. She wants to go out to eat and I have told them, repeatedly, that I don't want to do that. I still take precautions against COVID, but I can't get that through to her.

They have a lot more money than we do, so spending \$100 at a restaurant is nothing to them. I'm not comfortable spending money like that. I cook at home, which she rarely does. I dread the weekends when they come. How can I tell her that in MY home she should keep her opinions to herself?

FED UP IN THE SOUTH

DEAR FED UP: In the interest of preserving family harmony, do not confront your sister-in-law. You and your husband should speak to her AND his brother and lay down some ground rules about their visits, particularly the excessive spending on restaurants. Divide the TV entertainment time

DEAR ABBY

BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



equally between you. If that doesn't suit her, offer to loan her a book or suggest she bring reading material the next time she visits.

Unless you are quarantined, make a point of visiting another equally health-conscious friend so you aren't subjected to this woman's company all the time. You might also "sweetly" suggest that it doesn't seem fair she spends all her time with you during these visits, which deprives the other relatives.

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 41 Score units (Abbr.) 42 Nest egg acronym 44 Scotch cocktail 46 Angel, musically 50 GPS suggestion 51 Each 52 Halloween garb 56 Cathedral area 57 Killer whale 58 Before 59 1856 Stowe novel 60 Work hard 61 Cutting tool

DOWN 1 Dress oven edge 2 "Hail!" 3 Geological era 4 Ancient German 5 Peyton's brother 6 Utah ski resort 7 Encounters 8 Garfield's favorite dish 9 Actor Guinness 10 Former frosh 11 Head, to Henri 16 Status — 20 Inventor's monogram 21 Pottery 22 Mine, in Montreal 23 California's Big — 27 Danson of "Cheers" 29 Famed Motown trio, with "the" 30 A law — itself 31 Online crafts site 33 Omitted 35 Distant 38 Lanka lead-in 40 Human 43 Fancy neckwear 45 A/C stat 46 Royal flush, e.g. 47 On — with 48 Wander 49 Corrida charger 53 Biol. or chem. 54 Ballpark fig. 55 Stitch

Solution time: 24 mins.

Yesterday's Answer 01/05

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: January Jones, 45; Bradley Cooper, 48; Carrie Ann Inaba, 55; Diane Keaton, 77.

Happy Birthday: Pay more attention to what's going on at home. Look for alternative ways to balance your personal and professional lives to ensure you get the best of both worlds. Managing your time closely and keeping your emotions in check will counter any uncertainty you feel. Put greater emphasis on fitness, health and overall appearance. Prepare to speak up and make a difference. Your numbers are 4, 15, 19, 27, 32, 36, 48.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Be careful what you wish for. Rethink your strategy to ensure you understand the consequences. Do the work alone, and keep your thoughts and opinions to yourself until you are ready to initiate your plans. Financial gain is within reach. **

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): When in doubt, sit tight, look for signals and maintain your integrity. Educate yourself in areas where you lack information, and you'll soon discover what's best for you. Opportunity begins with you. Make it clear what you have to offer and what want in return. ****

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Keep your money safe. Emotional spending or contributions to questionable organizations are better off being disregarded. Turn your focus to something that benefits you and offers opportunities to use your skills to increase your profits. Strive to be cutting edge. ***

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Emotions will surface quickly. Contain how you feel before you do or say something you

will regret. Change can be beneficial. Give others a chance to voice an opinion and you will discover something that can make your life easier and your prospects brighter. ***

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Consider what's happening and seek ways to benefit. It's up to you to turn a negative into a positive. Take control of your life and adjust to whatever comes your way. If you go with the flow, you'll gain momentum. ***

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Lending a helping hand will connect you to people who can make a difference in your life. Embrace information offered enthusiastically, ask questions and implement suggestions into your daily routine. Use your attributes and charm to get ahead. ****

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Pay more attention to your health and well-being. Educate yourself about nutrition, fitness and giving your body what it needs to stay strong. Make changes at home that encourage a lifestyle geared toward whatever makes you happy. Romance is favored. *****

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Set the record straight and be honest about what you want and expect from others. Don't expect everyone to honor your wishes. It's up to you to follow through with your plans and make your dreams come true. Stick to your budget. ***

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Draw on your emotions, and you'll know what to do next. Evaluate relationships and the give-and-take factor that equality depends on before you agree to something that brings you down instead of propping you up. Assess, then

EUGENIA LAST THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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initiate change. *** CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Revisit your goals. Restructure whatever isn't working for you and eliminate the root cause of your anxiety or frustration. It's up to you to make suitable changes that enhance your life.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Invest in yourself, your home and meaningful relationships. Take the initiative and set your surroundings up to meet your needs. A quiet workplace and added conveniences that save time and money will pay off. Make health and fitness your priorities. ***

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Stick to simple protocol and avoid emotional drama. A personal situation will escalate if you aren't reasonable or let someone goad you into an argument. Pace yourself and choose your words carefully. A positive attitude will make a difference. *****

Birthday Baby: You are dapper, amenable and practical. You are proficient and novel.

☺: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ☹: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ☹☹: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ☹☹☹: Aim high; start new projects. ☹☹☹☹: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

Difficulty Level ★★★

1/05

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

Difficulty Level ★★★

1/04

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

MAGNETIC FIELDS Solution: 11 letters

G E E T R E T E M C E R I W F
C N L N N C N O I T A U Q E U
A N I E A D A T L N E L U L E
R P R R C L A E G M L E A O O
S G T R E T P E L A C S N P H
Y T S U S E R N O O P I O T I S
A T C C R S H N I A R T U M P S
S C I S Y H P I C T R T M P S
T S N C E T L E G R A H C R R
I N A E O A I A C N P D N O O
U A H P U L L S T R E N G T H
C F C Q M Q E F N O O W T O T
R V E C T O R V R E M F T N R
I A M L I O C O D E D S L O O
C H A I N N O I T C E R I D N

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Atoms, Attract, Cars, Chain, Charge, Circuits, Code, Coil, Compass, Current, Data, Density, Dipole, Direction, Electric, Energy, Engineering, Equal, Equation, Fans, Force, Free, Horseshoe, Iron, Mechanics, Meter, Newton, North, Particle, Physics, Plane, Proton, Pull, Quantum, Range, Repel, Rules, Scale, South, Spin, Static, Strength, Torque, Trains, Vector, Velocity, Wire

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NFL balances emotions, tight schedule after Hamlin shock

By **ROB MAADDI**

AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

The NFL pushed ahead Tuesday with a difficult balancing act, navigating players' emotions after Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin's shocking cardiac arrest with a tight playoff schedule and emphasizing Hamlin's health was its main focus.

The league informed the Buffalo Bills and Cincinnati Bengals that their game, suspended Monday night, would not be resumed this week while the Week 18 schedule remained unchanged, for now.

No decision regarding the possible resumption of the pivotal Bills-Bengals game has been made. The game was suspended in the first quarter when Hamlin suffered the cardiac arrest after making a tackle.

The 24-year-old Hamlin remained in critical condition a day after the Bills said his heart stopped following the seemingly routine play. Hamlin tackled Bengals wide receiver Tee Higgins, who led with his shoulder, then briefly got up before collapsing.

Medical staff restored his heartbeat during frantic moments on the field before he was loaded into an ambulance. Players from both teams were crying and praying during an emotional scene in front of a national television audience.

"Damar experienced cardiac arrest and was promptly resuscitated by on-site club physicians and independent medical personnel, all of whom are highly trained in implementing the plans for medical emergencies," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said in a letter sent to all teams, and obtained by The Associated Press. "Damar was stabilized and transported to the University



A scoreboard at Great American Ballpark displays a photo of Buffalo Bills' Damar Hamlin, Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2023, in Cincinnati. AP

of Cincinnati Medical Center, a Level One trauma center, where he remains in the ICU."

Hamlin's uncle, Dorian Glenn, told CNN and other outlets that Hamlin had to have his heart re-started twice — once on the field, and again after he arrived at the hospital. He said there were some encouraging signs for his nephew on Tuesday, such as doctors lowering the level of oxygen Hamlin needs from 100% to 50%.

Goodell informed the clubs that Dr. Nyaka NiiLampti had sent each team's clinician and head of player engagement information about mental health and support resources available to players and staff.

"Additional resources including on-site services can be available for any club that wishes this assistance," Goodell said.

Goodell told teams they would be promptly advised of any changes to this weekend's schedule.

Several teams canceled media availabilities, including the New England Patriots. They are scheduled to face the Bills on Sunday.

The Tennessee Titans and Jacksonville Jaguars practiced ahead of their game to determine the AFC South champion on Saturday night.

"Oh, I don't have no hesitation," Titans two-time Pro Bowl defensive tackle Jeffery Simmons said about playing. "But me personally, it's one of them things when you get shook up."

Simmons said his 15-year-old cousin, Jason "JJ" Hatcher, died Dec. 18 from a heart issue during a football practice. The teen, who was a sophomore at Hebron High School in Car-

rollton, Texas, is the son of former 10-year NFL veteran defensive end Jason Hatcher, who spent the last eight seasons of his career with the Dallas Cowboys.

Simmons received a call informing him of his cousin's death before the Titans played a late afternoon game in Los Angeles, a 17-14 loss to the Chargers.

"We just can't take this game for granted because you never know," Simmons said. "Sometimes we just get sidetracked. ... But the real reason why we play this game and sometimes we forget that, ... we're playing for each other. We're playing for our family. And most of all, just playing for ourselves because it's all we've been knowing all our whole life."

"And I'm sure that young man, it's all he knew his whole life," Simmons said of Ham-

lin. "You just never know when your last night may be. So there's just one thing you just can't take for granted. And I'm praying for him and his family."

Titans coach Mike Vrabel and Pittsburgh Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said they hadn't had any discussions with the league about postponing this week's games.

Aaron Rodgers, the reigning two-time NFL MVP, said he was "shook up."

"Your football mortality just comes right face to face. One of your brothers in the fraternity of the NFL is fighting for his life right now," the Green Bay Packers' quarterback said on his weekly appearance on "The Pat McAfee Show" on YouTube and SiriusXM.

"I've been part of a few games where they've carted guys off and we've had play-

ers with neck injuries. It shakes you to the core. That's injuries where they're awake and alert, and many of them give thumbs up or what not, and it still shakes you. It's like 10-, sometimes 15-minute delays on the field and, 'All right, go back out and play,' even though your buddy might not ever play again and we're hoping he can walk. It's a weird feeling."

"In this situation, this is unprecedented, definitely in my time. ... I've never seen something where a player had to be given CPR on the field and supposedly didn't have a pulse," Rodgers said. "I thought, 'There's no way. They're going to go back in the locker room and then come out and play. What? That can't happen.'"

The NFL disputed a television report that both teams were told to resume play after a five-minute warmup. "It never crossed our mind to talk about warming up to resume play," league executive Troy Vincent said.

The Kansas City Chiefs practiced Tuesday for their Saturday afternoon game against the Las Vegas Raiders. The Chiefs (13-3) are battling with the Bills (12-3) and Bengals (11-4) for the No. 1 seed in the AFC.

Thus, the outcome of the Bills-Bengals game has major playoff implications. The Bills entered the game in the top spot while the Bengals had a chance to clinch the AFC North with a victory and also were in the mix for the No. 1 seed along with Kansas City.

The Bengals led 7-3 in the first quarter when the game was stopped. The NFL is scheduled to begin playoffs on Jan. 14. The No. 1 seed in each conference gets a first-round bye and home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

By **TIM REYNOLDS**

AP SPORTS WRITER

Damar Hamlin's goal was simple: He wanted to raise \$2,500 online to buy toys for needy kids.

It took about two years.

Then came Monday, when the Buffalo Bills safety was critically injured and needed his heart restarted on the field in a chilling scene that unfolded during a nationally televised game against the Cincinnati Bengals. He instantly became one of the biggest stories in sports, and thousands of people found his GoFundMe page.

The result: roughly \$5.5 million donated in the first 24 hours after his injury. And the number is climbing.

A fundraiser that as of last month had raised \$2,921 was up to \$5,495,550 by 9 p.m.

Fans give millions to Damar Hamlin's toy drive for kids

Eastern on Tuesday — with about 183,000 people going online in that span to donate, on average, about \$30. Some of the donations were smaller. Some were more than \$5,000. A number of NFL players donated as well, including members of the New England Patriots, who are scheduled to play at Buffalo on Sunday for the regular-season finale.

On average, about 2.2 donations were made through his GoFundMe page every second in the first 24 hours after Hamlin got hurt. And many came with messages of hope for a 24-year-old player in his second season, sedated in a Cincinnati hospital, listed in critical condition and with some teammates unwilling to return to Buffalo just so they

could remain close to him.

"There are moments in life that stop the world," wrote Michael Lynch, who donated. "We all pray for two things. Your speedy recovery and that your impact to the world is enhanced by your go fund me."

The messages poured in from different fan bases, many of the donors letting the world know that they support other teams. One came with a hashtag that read, "we are all Bills fans."

Hamlin started the GoFundMe in December 2020. He was just wrapping up his college career and getting ready for the NFL draft process. And he wanted to have a toy drive at Kelly and Nina's Daycare Center — a facility co-owned by his mother — in his home-

town of McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, a place with about 6,000 residents along the south bank of the Ohio River.

"As I embark on my journey to the NFL, I will never forget where I come from and I am committed to using my platform to positively impact the community that raised me," Hamlin wrote when setting up the drive. "I created The Chasing M's Foundation as a vehicle that will allow me to deliver that impact, and the first program is the 2020 Community Toy Drive. This campaign gives you the opportunity to contribute to our first initiative and positively impact children who have been hardest hit by the pandemic."

He pulled the first event off with about 10 days of plan-

ning. Gifts poured in, some of it clothing donated by Pitt, where he had just finished playing. Hamlin's upbringing was far from easy: He lost three friends to gun violence while growing up and saw his father incarcerated for about 3 1/2 years for selling drugs. But as soon as he was able, Hamlin wanted to help others.

So, he started the toy drive. And his foundation will now have the ability to do more good than it likely ever thought possible.

"Damar created The Chasing M's Foundation to use as a vehicle to bring lasting impact to his community," his foundation wrote in a message posted to the donation page Tuesday. "The foundation supports toy drives, back-to-school drives,

kids camps, and more."

Many of the donations came from Bills fans, affectionately known as Bills Mafia, and this is far from the first time they've gone online to show support. In recent years, Bills fans have shown support for Miami quarterback Tua Tagovailoa's foundation after he left a game — also in Cincinnati — with a concussion; for Baltimore quarterback Lamar Jackson's charity after the Ravens lost a playoff game to Buffalo; and many made donations of \$16.88 to the P.U.N.T. Pediatric Cancer Collaborative in western New York following the death this summer of FIU player Luke Knox.

Luke Knox's brother, Dawson Knox, is a tight end for the Bills. The \$16.88 was a nod to their jersey numbers.

Pelé buried at cemetery in Brazilian city he made famous

SANTOS, Brazil (AP)—Brazil said a final farewell to Pelé on Tuesday, burying the legend who unified the bitterly divided country.

Newly inaugurated President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva paid his respects at Vila Belmiro, the stadium where Pelé played for most of his career.

Pelé died last week at age 82 and was laid to rest in Santos, the city where he became famous after moving there at age 15 to play for Santos FC. The funeral Mass was held at the team's Vila Belmiro stadium before his black casket was driven through the streets of the of Santos in a firetruck.

It was taken into the cemetery as bands played the team's official song and a Roman Catholic hymn. Before the golden-wrapped casket arrived, attendees sang samba songs that Pelé liked.

Some Brazilian soccer legends weren't there.

"Where's Ronaldo Nazario? Where's Kaká, where's Neymar?" asked Claudionor Alves, 67, who works at a bakery next to the stadium. "Do they think they will be remembered like Pelé will? These guys didn't want to stop their vacations, that's the problem."

Geovana Sarmento, 17,

waited in a three-hour line to view Pelé's body as it lay in repose. She came with her father, who was wearing a Brazil shirt with Pelé's name.

"I am not a Santos fan, neither is my father. But this guy invented Brazil's national team. He made Santos stronger, he made it big, how could you not respect him? He is one of the greatest people ever, we needed to honor him," she said.

Caio Zalke, 35, an engineer, wore a Brazil shirt as he waited in the line.

"Pelé is the most important Brazilian of all time. He made the sport important for Brazil and he made Brazil important for the world," Zalke said.

Pelé in the 1960s and 1970s was perhaps the world's most famous athlete. He met presidents and queens, and a civil war in Nigeria was put on hold so people could watch him play. Many Brazilians credit Pelé with putting the country on the world stage for the first time.

Rows of shirts with Pelé's No. 10 were placed behind one of the stadium's goals, waving in the city's summer winds. A section of the stands filled up with bouquets of flowers placed by mourners and sent by clubs and star players — Neymar and Ronaldo among them



Brazilian soccer great Pele lies in state at Vila Belmiro stadium in Santos, Brazil, Monday, Jan. 2, 2023. AP

— from around the world as loudspeakers played the song "Eu sou Pelé" ("I am Pelé") recorded by him.

The crowd was mostly local, although some came from far away, and many mourners were too young ever to have seen Pelé play. The mood was light, as people filtered out of the stadium to local bars, wearing Santos FC and Brazil shirts.

Claudio Carrança, 32, a

salesman, said: "I never saw him play, but loving Pelé is a tradition that goes from father to son in Santos. I learned his history, saw his goals, and I see how Santos FC is important because he is important. I know some Santos fans have children supporting other teams. But that's just because they never saw Pelé in action. If they had, they would feel this gratitude I feel now."

Among those at the stadium was Pelé's best friend Manoel Maria, also a former Santos player.

"If I had all the wealth in the world I would never be able to repay what this man did for me and my family," Maria said. "He was as great a man as he was as a player — the best of all time. His legacy will outlive us all. And that can be seen in this long line with people of all

ages here."

FIFA President Gianni Infantino told journalists that every country should name a stadium after Pelé.

"I am here with a lot of emotion, sadness, but also with a smile because he gave us so many smiles," Infantino said. "As FIFA, we will pay a tribute to the 'King' and we ask the whole world to observe a minute of silence."

Another fan and friend in line was Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Gilmar Mendes.

"It is a very sad moment, but we are now seeing the real meaning of this legendary player to our country," Mendes told journalists. "My office has shirts signed by Pelé, a picture of him as a goalkeeper, also signed by him. DVDs, photos, a big collection of him."

Pelé had undergone treatment for colon cancer since 2021. The medical center where he had been hospitalized said he died of multiple organ failure as a result of the cancer.

Pelé led Brazil to World Cup titles in 1958, 1962 and 1970 and remains one of the team's all-time leading scorers with 77 goals. Neymar tied Pelé's record during this year's World Cup in Qatar.

Thunder blow out Celtics without Gilgeous-Alexander



OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Oklahoma City's top scorer was out, so everybody pitched in to make things work.

Josh Giddey scored a season-high 25 points and the short-handed Oklahoma City Thunder blew out the NBA-leading Boston Celtics 150-117 on Tuesday night.

Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, who ranks among the league's leaders with 30.8 points per game, sat out with an illness. Without him, the Thunder set a record for points since the team moved to Oklahoma City from Seattle before the 2008-2009 season. The previous mark was 149 points in 2013.

Lu Dort scored 23 points and Jalen Williams, Tre Mann and Isaiah Joe each added 21 points for the Thunder. They shot 59.2% from the field.

"I just think we've got great players and great people," Mann said. "Guys who don't really care who gets the credit."

The Thunder hadn't won a game by more than 16 and the Celtics hadn't lost by more than 16 this season. Oklahoma City coach

Mark Daigneault said the result came from his team's approach.

"I told them after the game, I want them to realize what got it going, which was we had a great practice yesterday, came into the game with great focus on both ends of the floor, what we had to do, and that's what allowed us to have fun tonight," he said. "And we can't lose sight of that."

Oklahoma City took advantage of the fact that Robert Williams, one of Boston's primary rim protectors, was out managing his injured left knee. The Thunder made 38 of 58 shots inside the 3-point line.

"You have to play with a sense of humility every night knowing your opponent wants to beat you," Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said. "We have to match that, and we didn't. We got outplayed in every aspect of the game."

Jaylen Brown scored 29 points for Boston, and Jayson Tatum added 27.

The Thunder led 74-54 at halftime behind Joe's 17 points on 6-for-9 shooting. Oklahoma City shot 57% in the first half. The Celtics trailed big, despite Brown's 18 points in the first half.

Bucks 123, Wizards 113

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo says he wants to produce with so much consistency that it causes boredom.

That's the only respect in which the two-time MVP has fallen shortly lately.

Antetokounmpo scored a career-high 55 points with a series of thrilling dunks and drives Tuesday as the Milwaukee Bucks beat Washington 123-113 on Tuesday night, snapping the Wizards' five-game winning streak. The spectacular forward also had 10 rebounds and seven assists to continue arguably the best stretch of his career.

"I want to get in a position ... that my game is boring," Antetokounmpo said. "I just do what I do and people don't talk about it because it becomes boring — I do it every single night. That's what I want to do. I want other people to feel like my game is boring. But I don't get bored. The greats — the best players — never get bored. They go out there and they always give their best any given night."

Antetokounmpo has at least 40 points, 10 rebounds and five assists in each of the

last three games he's played. The two-time MVP sat out a 118-95 loss to the Wizards on Sunday because of a sore left knee.

The only other players in NBA history to have three straight performances of 40 points, 10 rebounds and five assists are Elgin Baylor in 1961 and 1963, Wilt Chamberlain in 1963 and Russell Westbrook in 2016. The only other Bucks to score at least 40 points in three straight appearances are Flynn Robinson in February 1969 and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar in February 1972.

"He's been kind of playing with this kind of determination, this kind of just willing us in games," Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. "Tonight we were able to win it. He's just been phenomenal."

Bucks center Brook Lopez is in his fifth season of playing alongside Antetokounmpo. The 7-footer couldn't recall a regular-season stretch in which Antetokounmpo has played better than this.

"He's just constantly improving," said Lopez, who had 21 points and 12 rebounds. "When you think where else can he go and how else can he improve, he just improves again. We're

going to have to expand the English language in some way to come up with words (to describe him). I don't know if I've said that before, but I'm sure he's going to improve again. Who knows what he's going to do next. He's just so otherworldly."

Antetokounmpo's previous career high was a 52-point effort against the Philadelphia 76ers on March 17, 2019. He just missed the single-game franchise scoring record owned by Michael Redd, who scored 57 points against the Utah Jazz in November 2006.

Washington's Bradley Beal returned after missing three games with a sore left hamstring, but he played just 13 minutes. Beal scored eight points before the hamstring issue prevented him from playing at all in the second half.

"Same area," Wizards coach Wes Unseld Jr. said. "We just have to get it evaluated."

Kristaps Porzingis scored 22 points for the Wizards, and Kyle Kuzma added 20.

Milwaukee's Bobby Portis had 17 points and 13 rebounds.

Kings 117, Jazz 115

In Salt Lake City De'Aaron Fox made a driving layup in

the final second and scored 22 of his 37 points in the fourth quarter to help the Sacramento Kings beat the Utah Jazz 117-115 on Tuesday night.

Utah's Lauri Markkanen made a 3-pointer at the final buzzer that was initially ruled good, but reversed upon replay.

Time and again, Sacramento worked Fox into situations where he could use his quickness to get to the basket or hit mid-range jumpers against sagging defenders.

Fox's big fourth quarter included an emphatic dunk and an 18-foot pullup with 23.1 seconds remaining to put the Kings up 115-112.

Markkanen made all three free throws on a foul behind the arc, but Fox got switched onto the Finnish 7-footer and drove by him for an acrobatic layup.

Markkanen had 28 points, including a 15-for-15 performance from the line, and Jordan Clarkson added 24. The Jazz dropped their fifth straight game, with the five losses by a combined 17 points.

Domantas Sabonis, playing with a broken right thumb, had 21 points, 14 rebounds and eight assists to help the Kings win for the third time in four games.

Barefoot runners keep streak alive

By LEIGH GASES

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REPORTER

Running is hard enough in itself, and when paired with running barefoot—then you’ve just upped the level of difficulty—but that’s exactly what two runners did during the Northern Marianas Athletics 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay race last Dec. 24, 2022.

“Mike” Chang Whan Jang, an eighth grade physical education teacher at Hopwood Middle School, and “Charles” Chong Nam Lee, who is retired, cruised barefoot from the Pacific Islands Club in San Antonio to the Last Command Post in Marpi.

For Jang, he continued his Christmas tradition of running the grueling 13.7-mile course on his lonesome, forgetting the relay part of the race. Since his first Christmas Relay Race in 1982, he has run the entire course by himself—and barefoot.

As usual, the intrepid 71-year-old started the

course at 5am—an hour before the other racers to ensure he had ample time to finish it. This year, his time was 2:59:00.

Jang said that he enjoys running the course by himself because he gets to stop on his own time and snap some photos of the Christmas lights and decorations that donned the Christmas village in the Garapan Fishing Base.

“I just enjoy this atmosphere—everyone cheers me on. I like it because of the friendly atmosphere,” said Jang.

Although he doesn’t run everyday now, he continues to support the benefits of running barefoot; and to stay fit, he plays tennis, pickleball, and does high-intensity interval training or HIIT workouts of running and walking at the beach during the weekend.

He said he will definitely join this year’s relay race again and is looking forward to 10 more years of running it.

The 64-year-old Lee, who was inspired by Jang to run barefoot, took turns with his Run Saipan Pacemakers team running 1-mile incre-

ments.

His team, which is the oldest team in the race with all their ages combined, included Run Saipan members Ann Bang, Jessica Ortizo, Matthew Furan, and Rosemarie

Chisato. They finished the course in 1:45.20, proving that age did not matter.

Lee, a Run Saipan member who always runs barefoot in their races, has run barefoot for three years now.



LEIGH GASES

“Mike” Chang Whan Jang finished the 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay race barefoot in under three hours, keeping his tradition of running the race solo and barefoot, last Dec. 24.

“The first time I tried to follow Jang to run barefoot, I failed because it was so painful. But he advised me to do it slowly, so everyday, little by little, I walk barefoot, then run barefoot little by little. Then finally, after three months, there was no problem. After six months, I could run anywhere barefoot.”

Lee, who is also a Dolphin

Swim Club member, said the secret to staying fit is being stress-free and staying physically active. “I don’t want to stress. I always just want to relax and have good relationships with people. It’s a beautiful world. Everyday, I wake up at 4:30am, run for one hour and then swim in the ocean for one hour.”



LAO ZHANG

Run Saipan Pacemakers, from left, “Charles” Chong Nam Lee, Jessica Ortizo, Matthew Furan, and Rosemarie Chisato. Lee ran the 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay in 1-mile increments barefoot through the 13.7-mile course from Pacific Islands Club Saipan to the Last Command Post in Marpi last Dec. 24.

SIMON

From page 20

up and start running. Then, he thanked Run Saipan for “continuing to push me harder each day. I want to thank the [Northern Marianas Athletics] team for helping me throughout my running journey, especially coach Robin Sapong who’s helped me to see my true potential. And most importantly, I want to dedicate this to [Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr.]. Ed has seen my running journey throughout the years, and words cannot sum up how I feel to this day, because he still has put a lot of faith in me, even at times when I wanted to quit—and so for that, I am more than grateful for everyone who has been a part of my running journey.”

He also dedicates his accomplishment to his students. “As a coach, and as a teacher, I want to show them that anything is possible as

long as you set your mind to it. Not to just be physically fit, but also for them to understand that whatever challenges you may face in life, whether it be through trying to get a good grade or trying to get better at something, that it’s possible, and that as long as you put the effort into doing what you do, you got what it takes.”

As to what’s next, the Run Saipan member said that his two goals this year are to continue his run streak and to complete a full marathon.

Necesito then recalled when he joined the recent Run Saipan Half Marathon in December and how he crawled to the finish line in dramatic fashion. He said that he decided to sprint the last 50 meters downhill and “by the time I was inches away from the finish line, my right leg cramped and then my left leg cramped. So at that point, I couldn’t pick myself up and so I did what I had to do to finish, so



LEIGH GASES

Simon Necesito, along with members of Run Saipan, puts up the No. 1 in homage to his 1-year running streak on Tuesday.

I crawled.”

Dela Cruz said of his padawan’s accomplishment, “I’m proud of Simon. He did so much this year for Run Saipan and still did his running streak. He came from such a long road. He was injured and had to work

his way back up and this year the results speak for themselves with how much weight he lost and how much faster his race times were compared to where he first started. Everyone at Run Saipan couldn’t be more proud of him.”

CEPEDA

From page 20

series in 2022. MRA did not have any major injuries and the number of crashes during the races have decreased to almost none.”

The decrease in crashes came even as MRA welcomed new members and added new divisions such as the Intermediate Class and the Mama’s

Class for the TurkeyCross, which was for one weekend only during the TurkeyCross Race.

As far as improvements on the Cowtown Race Track this year, Cepeda said MRA added an additional jump, widened the turns, put in new dirt, and also expanded the pits area.

“We are hoping to expand with a mini track for beginners by the start of the points series in 2023,” he said.

As for the rest of the year, Cepeda said MRA will elect a new board today and he will again run for president. He’s also excited for the 2023 season of the points race and hopefully MRA’s participation in the Guam Smokin’ Wheels Race the weekend after Easter Sunday.

He also hopes to have Guam riders return for the TurkeyCross Race in 2023.

“As president of the MRA

board of directors, I am proud that our members continue to improve their riding skills and promote the sport in the community. Thank you to all members who have maintained the commitment to race every month and assist in every way they can. Special thank you goes out for the hospitality given to the Guam riders and delegation that came out to race in the TurkeyCross Race,” he said.

US

From page 20

He swam the 100m butterfly in 54.55 to break the 1:00.07 set by David Palacios in the 2005 Pacific Mini Games in Palau in July 2005.

Aleksenko swam the 200m butterfly in 2:02.96 to reset the 2:15.09 recorded by Rezne Wong in the 2010 Micronesian Games in Palau in March 2010.

He swam the 50m freestyle 23.31 to top Juhn Tenorio’s 23.97 he swam in the FINA World Championships in Abu Dhabi in December 2021.

Finally, Aleksenko finished the 50m backstroke in 25.84 to break the 25.91 Kensuke Kimura swam in the Mie Winter Meet in Aichi, Japan

in February 2018.

He then teamed up with Suzuki, Batallones, and Shoko Litulumar to reset the CNMI nation record in the 50m x 4 mixed free relay by swimming it in 1:46.79. That broke the 1:50.09 set last year in the FINA World Championships in Abu Dhabi by Tenorio, Suzuki, Asaka Litulumar, and Shoko Litulumar.

Aleksenko, Suzuki, Batallones, and Shoko Litulumar also reset the mark in the 50m x 4 mixed medley relay when they swam it in 1:58.93.

The old mark of 2:09.28 was set in the 2019 Micronesian Swimming Championships in Palau in April 2019 by Lennosuke Suzuki, Juhn Tenorio, Aika Watanabe, and Sophia Gauran.



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Barefoot runners keep streak alive

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Simon completes 1-year running streak

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Simon Necesito has finally seized the day—or in his case, seized the year—as he completed his 365-day running streak on a rainy Tuesday evening.



Necesito, a Dandan Middle School teacher, is the latest to join the ranks of streak runners alongside Dr. Galvin Guerrero, who recently completed his first year.

Since 2017, the 28-year-old has made many attempts to run everyday, but only last Jan. 1, 2022, has he fully and seriously committed to it.

He said that he acknowledged the failures of his previous streak attempts and then just one day decided to make a run for it—literally.

And with the support of Run Saipan, finished his 365th consecutive run on the Beach

Road Pathway.

Along with joining the exclusive numbers of streak runners in the CNMI, running has helped Necesito shed weight. When he started, he was 225 lbs and has lost 30 lbs since then. Combining running and strength training at Latte Built Gym for the past year “have helped me with my performance during my runs.”

Running one mile is the minimum requirement to do the challenge and Necesito varies the distances of his daily runs.

After his 365th straight run, he thanked his friend, Vince, who first convinced him to get

See **SIMON** on Page 19



Run Saipan joins Simon Necesito, front left, on his 365-day running streak at the Beach Road Pathway in front of the Oleai Beach Bar. and Grill on Tuesday.

LEIGH GASES

US prep school interested in Isaiah

By MARK RABAGO
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At 16 years old and a junior at Marianas High School, Isaiah Aleksenko has yet to seriously think about what school he will attend in college.

But a couple of years before graduating from secondary school, the Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center stalwart received an offer to continue his high school education in the U.S. mainland.

The offer from a Chattanooga, Tennessee-based educational college-preparatory school comes in the heels of Aleksenko's impressive performance in the 2022 FINA World Championships in Melbourne, Australia where he broke four CNMI national records.

“I was very surprised because this was the first time I had a school offer me to go to their school. I’m not yet ready to take a step like this because this is a high school and I’m not ready to leave my mom behind and not be able to see her for five years. I hope after the next World

Championships in Japan, I can have more opportunities and offers to go to colleges,” said Aleksenko.

Tsunami Saipan coach Hiroyuki Kimura said the offer from a leading preparatory school in the U.S. only means that Aleksenko's hard work is finally paying off.

“This means Isaiah's name is known to coaches in the U.S. mainland. A couple of other college coaches also came to talk to me in Melbourne. I’m so glad that Isaiah, even at a young age, is already bringing honor to the CNMI.”

Kimura, however, said that the offer from the preparatory school is only the start.

“Melbourne is just the prologue. Isaiah's great adventure is just be-

ginning. If we practice harder and harder, we will be able to show better performances and other coaches will become more interested in him.”

Aleksenko broke four NMI records—the 100m butterfly, 200m butterfly, 50m freestyle, and 50m backstroke—in last year's short course championships.

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Aleksenko

Cepeda toasts successful year for MRA



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Marianas Racing Association president Charles Cepeda in action during last year's Turkey-Cross Race 2022 at the Cowtown Race Track.

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Marianas Racing Association had a banner year, as far as MRA president Charles Cepeda is concerned.

“The year 2022 for Marianas Racing Association was very successful. I would rate it a 9 on a scale of 1-10. MRA successfully held seven points series races and a grand race participated by our racing family from the Guam

Motorcycle and ATV Club. Putting together these races was a huge accomplishment by the MRA board members of 2022,” he said.

Cepeda said the year's highlight was hands down the Turkey-Cross Race.

“I'd say highlight for MRA was definitely the huge success of the TurkeyCross Race held on the weekend of Thanksgiving with over 30 riders from the GMAC joining

the race.”

The MRA president believes this is so because it showed that Saipan riders have steadily improved and are at par with riders from Guam.

“It showed the improvement in riding skills for all MRA members. Not only in the competition level but the riders' improvements overall. It is highlighted in the number of crashes during the points

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